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THE LIFE
OF
GEORGE WASHINGTON

VOLUME TWO

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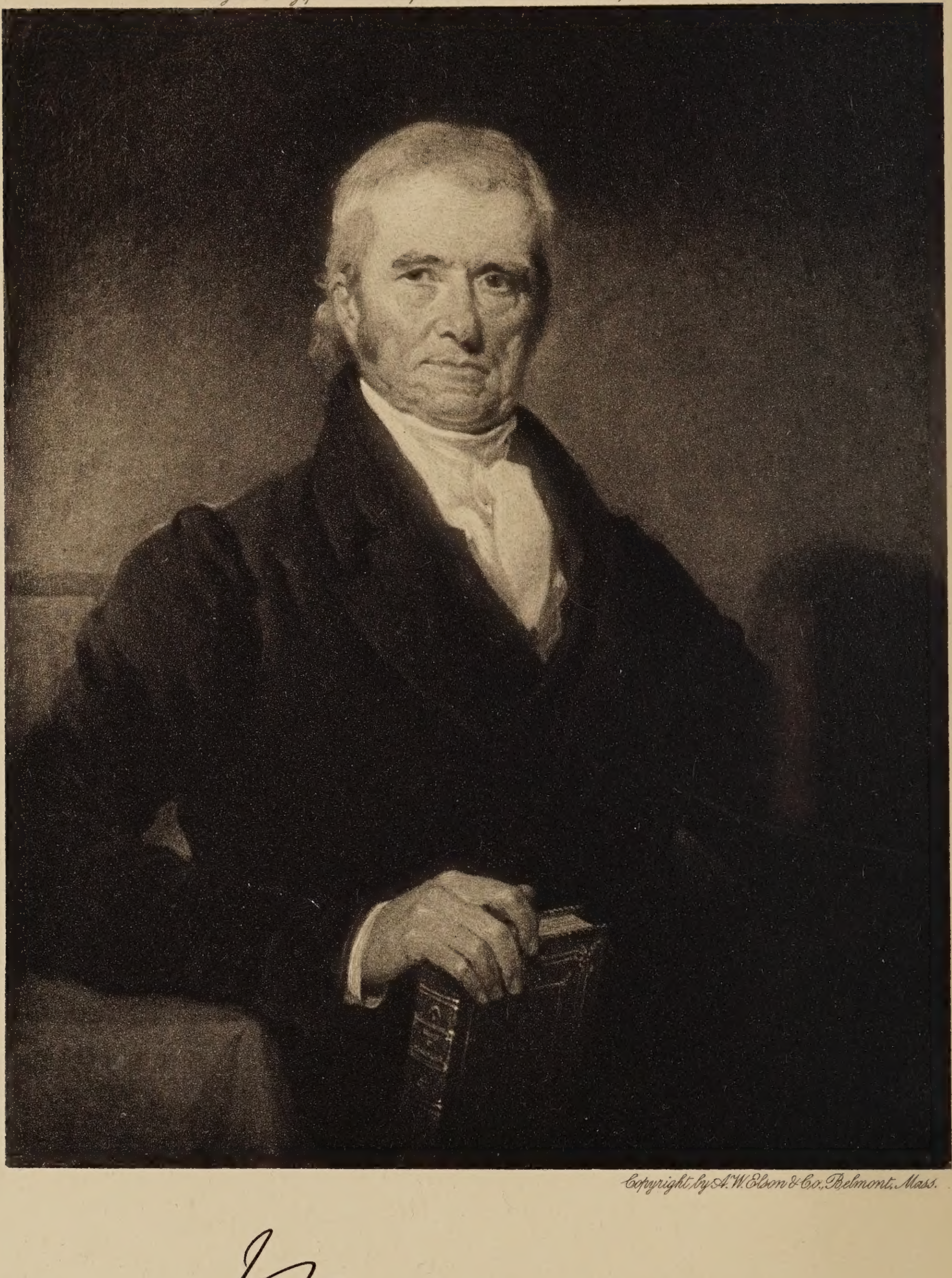

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THE LIFE
OF
GEORGE WASHINGTON
COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE AMERICAN FORCES
DURING THE WAR WHICH ESTABLISHED THE INDEPENDENCE OF HIS COUNTRY
AND FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

COMPILED UNDER THE INSPECTION OF
THE HONOURABLE BUSHROD WASHINGTON
From Original Papers
BEQUEATHED TO HIM BY HIS DECEASED RELATIVE

BY
JOHN MARSHALL

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
HON. HENRY ST. GEORGE TUCKER
FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

New York
WALTON BOOK COMPANY
MCMXXX

THE LIFE

OF

GEORGE WASHINGTON

CHAPTER I

In South Carolina and Georgia, the campaign of 1781 was uncommonly active. The importance of the object, the perseverance with which it was pursued, the talents of the generals, the courage, activity, and sufferings of the armies, and the accumulated miseries of the inhabitants, gave to the contest for these states, a degree of interest seldom bestowed on military transactions, in which greater numbers have not been employed.

When Lord Cornwallis entered North Carolina, the military operations in the more southern states were committed to Lord Rawdon. For the preservation of his power, a line of posts slightly fortified had been continued from Charleston, by the way of Camden and Ninety Six, to Augusta, in Georgia. The spirit of resistance was still kept up in the north-western and north-eastern parts of the state, by Generals Sumpter and Marion, who respectively commanded a corps of militia. Their exertions, though great, seem not to have been successful; and they excited no alarm, because no addition to their strength was apprehended.

Such was the situation of the country when General Greene formed the bold resolution of endeavouring to reannex it to the American union. His army consisted of about eighteen hundred men. The prospect of procuring subsistence was unpromising, and the chance of reinforcements precarious. He was apprised of the dangers to be encountered, but believed it to be for the public interest to meet them. "I shall take every measure," said this gallant officer, in a letter communicating his plan of operations to General Washington, "to avoid a misfortune. But necessity obliges me to commit myself to chance, and if any accident should attend me, I trust my friends will do justice to my reputation."

The extensive line of posts maintained by Lord Rawdon, presented to Greene many objects, at which, it was probable he might strike with advantage. The day preceding his march from the camp on Deep river, he detached Lee to join General Marion, and communicated his intention of entering South Carolina to General Pickens with a request that he would assemble the western militia, and lay siege to Ninety Six, and Augusta.

Having made these arrangements, he moved from Deep river on the seventh of April, and encamped before Camden on the nineteenth of the same month, within half a mile of the British works. Lord Rawdon had received early notice of his approach, and was prepared for his reception.

Camden stands on a gentle elevation, and is covered on the south and south-west by the Wateree,[1] and on the east by Pinetree creek. A strong chain of redoubts, extending from the river to the creek, protected the north and west sides of the town. Being unable to storm the works or to invest them on all sides, Greene contented himself with lying before the place in the hope of being reinforced by militia, or of some event which might bring on an action in the open field. With this view he retired a small distance, and encamped on Hobkirk's hill, about a mile and a half from the town. While in this situation, he received information that Colonel Watson was marching up the Santee with about four hundred men. A junction between these two divisions of the British army, could be prevented only by intercepting Watson while at a distance from Camden. For this purpose, he crossed Sand-hill creek and encamped east of Camden, on the road leading to Charleston. It being impracticable to transport the artillery and baggage over the deep marshes adjoining the creek, Colonel Carrington with the North Carolina militia was directed to convey them to a place of safety, and to guard them till farther orders. The army continued a few days in its new encampment, during which the troops subsisted on the scanty supplies furnished by the neighbourhood. Greene was compelled at length, by the want of provisions, to relinquish this position. About the same time he received intelligence which induced him to doubt the approach of Watson. On which he ordered Lieutenant Colonel Carrington to rejoin him; and on the 24th returned to the north side of the town, and again encamped on Hobkirk's hill, a ridge covered with uninterrupted wood through which the great Waxhaw road passes. The army was encamped in order of battle, its left covered by the swamp of Pine-tree creek.

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[1] Higher up, this river is called the Catawba.

A drummer, who deserted on the morning after Greene's return, and before he was rejoined by Lieutenant Colonel Carrington, gave information to Lord Rawdon that the artillery and militia had been detached. His lordship determined to seize this favourable occasion for fighting his enemy to advantage, and, at the head of nine hundred men, marched out of town on the morning of the twenty-fifth to attack the American army.

Lieutenant Colonel Carrington had arrived in camp that morning, and brought with him a supply of provisions which had been issued to the troops, some of whom were employed in cooking and others in washing their clothes. Notwithstanding those occupations, they were in reach of their arms, and were in readiness to take their ground and engage at a moment's warning.

By keeping close to the swamp, and making a circuit of some distance, Lord Rawdon gained the American left without being perceived; and about eleven, his approach was announced by the fire of the advanced piquets, who were half a mile in front of Greene's encampment. Orders were instantly given to form the American line of battle.

The Virginia brigade commanded by General Huger, consisting of two regiments under Campbell and Hawes, was drawn up on the right of the great road. The Maryland brigade commanded by Colonel Williams, consisting of two regiments, under Gunby and Ford, was on the left, and the artillery was placed in the centre. The North Carolina militia under Colonel Read formed a second line; and Captain Kirkwood with the light infantry was placed in front for the purpose of supporting the piquets, and retarding the advance of the enemy. General Greene remained on the right, with Campbell's regiment.

Captain Morgan of Virginia, and Captain Benson of Maryland, who commanded the piquets, gave the enemy a warm reception; but were soon compelled to retire. Captain Kirkwood also was driven in, and the British troops appeared in view. Rawdon continued his march through the wood along the low ground in front of the Maryland brigade which was in the act of forming, until he reached the road, where he displayed his column.

Perceiving that the British advanced with a narrow front, Greene ordered Colonel Ford, whose regiment was on the extreme left, and Lieutenant Colonel Campbell, whose regiment was on the extreme right, severally to attack their flanks, while Gunby and Hawes should advance upon their front with charged bayonets. To complete their destruction by cutting off their retreat to the town, Lieutenant Colonel Washington was ordered to pass their left flank and charge them in the rear.

The regiments commanded by Ford and Campbell, being composed chiefly of new levies, did not change their ground, and perform the evolutions necessary for the duty assigned to them, with the requisite rapidity and precision; in consequence of which Rawdon, who instantly perceived the danger that threatened his flanks, had time to extend his front by bringing the volunteers of Ireland into his line.

This judicious movement disconcerted the design on his flanks, and brought the two armies into action fronting each other. But the regiments of Ford and Campbell were thrown into some confusion by the abortive attempt to gain the flanks of the British.

Colonel Washington too was compelled by the thick underwood and felled trees which obstructed his direct course, to make so extensive a circuit, that he came into the rear of the British at a greater distance from the scene of action than was intended, in consequence of which he fell in with their medical and other staff, and with a number of the followers of the army and idle spectators, who took no part in the action. Too humane to cut his way through this crowd, he employed so much time in taking their verbal parole, that he could not reach the rear of the

British line until the battle was ended. These casualties disappointed this very interesting part of Greene's intended operations.[1]

The artillery, however, played on the enemy with considerable effect; and the regiments of Gunby and Hawes advanced on the British front with resolution. Some companies on the right of the Maryland regiment returned the fire of the enemy, and their example was followed by the others. Notwithstanding this departure from orders, they continued to advance with intrepidity, and Greene entertained sanguine hopes of victory. His prospects were blasted by one of those incidents against which military prudence can make no provision.

Captain Beaty, who commanded on the right of Gunby's regiment, was killed, upon which his company with that adjoining it got into confusion and dropped out of the line. Gunby ordered the other companies, which were still advancing, to fall back, and form, with the two companies, behind the hill which the British were ascending. This retrograde movement was mistaken for a retreat, and the regiment gave way. Encouraged by this circumstance, the British pressed forward with increased ardour, and all the efforts of Colonel Williams, and of Gunby and Howard, to rally the regiment were, for a time, ineffectual. This veteran regiment, distinguished alike for its discipline and courage, which with the cavalry of Washington, had won the battle of the Cowpens, and nearly won that at Guilford court house, was seized with an unaccountable panic which, for a time, resisted all the efforts of their officers.

The flight of the first Maryland regiment increased the confusion which the change of ground had produced in the second; and, in attempting to restore order, Colonel Ford was mortally wounded. Lord Rawdon improved these advantages to the utmost. His right gained the summit of the hill, forced the artillery to retire, and turned the flank of the second Virginia regiment, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Hawes, which had advanced some distance down the hill. By this time the first Virginia regiment, which Greene had endeavoured to lead in person against the left flank of the British, being also in some disorder, began to give ground. Perceiving this reverse in his affairs, and knowing that he could not rely on his second line, Greene thought it most adviseable to secure himself from the hazard of a total defeat by withdrawing the second Virginia regiment from the action.

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[1] This account of the battle of Hobkirk's hill varies in several particulars from that contained in the first edition. In making the alteration the author has followed the letter of General Davie, published in Mr. Johnson's biography of General Greene. General Davie was known to the author to be a gentleman in whose representations great confidence is to be placed on every account, and his situation in the army enabled him to obtain the best information.

The Maryland brigade was in part rallied; but Lord Rawdon had gained the hill, and it was thought too late to retrieve the fortune of the day. Greene determined to reserve his troops for a more auspicious moment, and ordered a retreat.

Finding that the infantry had retreated, Colonel Washington also retired with the loss of only three men, bringing with him about fifty prisoners, among whom were all the surgeons belonging to the British army.

The Americans retreated in good order about four miles from the field of battle, and proceeded, next day, to Rugeley's mills. The pursuit was continued about three miles. In the course of it, some sharp skirmishing took place, which was terminated by a vigorous charge made by Colonel Washington on a corps of British horse who led their van. This corps being broken and closely pursued, the infantry in its rear retreated precipitately into Camden.

The number of continental troops engaged in this action amounted to about twelve hundred[1] men, and the loss in killed, wounded, and missing, to two hundred and sixty-six. Among the killed was Captain Beaty of Maryland, who was mentioned by General Greene as an ornament to his profession; and among the wounded was Colonel Ford, of Maryland, a gallant officer, whose wounds proved mortal. The militia attached to the army amounted to two hundred and sixty-six, of whom two were missing. The total loss sustained by the British army has been stated at two hundred and fifty-eight, of whom thirty-eight were killed in the field.

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[1] There is some variance between this statement and that which has been made by Mr. Ramsay and Mr. Gordon, although their estimates are supposed to have been formed on the same document—the field return made by the adjutant general of the southern army, dated the 26th of April. This return contains a column of the present fit for duty, and also exhibits the killed, wounded, and missing, but contains no column of total numbers. Mr. Ramsay and Mr. Gordon are supposed to have taken the column of present fit for duty as exhibiting the strength of the army on the day of the battle; but as this return was made the day after the action the author has supposed that the killed, wounded, and missing, must be added to the numbers fit for duty on the day of the return, to give the actual strength of the army at the time of the engagement.

The plan which the strength of Camden and his own weakness had induced General Greene originally to adopt, was still substantially pursued. He remained in the vicinity of that place, and by the activity of his cavalry, straightened the communication of the garrison with the neighbouring country. Their distress for provisions had been considerably increased by the progress of Marion and Lee.

Lieutenant Colonel Lee joined Marion a few days after he was detached from the camp on Deep river; and these two officers commenced their operations against the line of communication between Camden and Charleston, by laying siege to fort Watson, which capitulated in a few days. The acquisition of this fort afforded the means of interrupting the intercourse between Camden and Charleston, and opposed an obstacle to the retreat of Lord Rawdon which he would have found it difficult to surmount.

From the increasing perils of his situation, his lordship was relieved by the arrival of Colonel Watson. May 7.

In attempting to obey the orders, which were given by Lord Rawdon on the approach of Greene, to join him at Camden, that officer found himself opposed by Marion and Lee, who had seized the passes over the creeks in his route; and had thus completely arrested his march. To elude these vigilant adversaries, Watson returned down the Santee, and crossing that river near its mouth, marched up its southern side, and recrossing it above the American detachment, and, eluding all the measures taken to intercept him, accomplished his object with much toil and hazard.

This reinforcement gave the British general a decided superiority, and Greene entertained no doubt of its being immediately employed. On the day of its arrival, therefore, he withdrew from the neighbourhood of Camden, and took a strong position behind Sawney's creek.

On the night of the seventh, as had been conjectured, Rawdon passed the Wateree at Camden ferry, intending to turn the flank of his enemy, and to attack his rear, where the ground was less difficult than in front. On being informed that the American army had changed its position, he followed it to its new encampment. This was so judiciously chosen that he despaired of being able to force it; and, after some ineffectual manœuvres to draw Greene from it, returned to Camden.

Lord Rawdon had been induced to relinquish, thus hastily, his designs upon Greene, by the insecurity of his situation. The state of the British power in South Carolina was such as to require a temporary surrender of the upper country. Marion and Lee, after completely destroying his line of communication on the north side of the Santee, had crossed that river, and permitted no convoy from Charleston to escape their vigilance. On the eighth of May, after Watson had passed them, they laid siege to a post at Motte's house, on the south side of the Congaree, near its junction with the Wateree, which had been made the depot of all the supplies designed for Camden.

From the energy of this party as well as from the defection of the inhabitants, Lord Rawdon had reason to apprehend the loss of all his lower posts, unless he should take a position which would support them. He had therefore determined to evacuate Camden, unless the issue of a battle with Greene should be such as to remove all fears of future danger from that officer.

Having failed in his hope of bringing on a general engagement, he evacuated Camden, and marched down the river on its north side to Neilson's ferry. Among the objects to be obtained by this movement was the security of the garrison at Motte's house. But the siege of that place had been so vigorously prosecuted that, on crossing the river, his lordship received the unwelcome intelligence that it had surrendered on the twelfth, and that its garrison, consisting of one hundred and sixty-five men, had become prisoners. On the preceding day, the post at Orangeburg had surrendered to Sumpter.

On the evening of the fourteenth Lord Rawdon moved from Neilson's ferry, and marched to Monk's Corner, a position which enabled him to cover those districts from which Charleston drew its supplies.

While the British army was thus under the necessity of retiring, the American force was exerted with a degree of activity which could not be surpassed. After the post at Motte's house had fallen, Marion proceeded against Georgetown, on the Black river, which place he reduced and Lee marched against fort Granby, a post on the south of the Congaree, which was garrisoned by three hundred and fifty-two men, principally militia. The place was invested on the evening of the fourteenth, and the garrison capitulated the next morning.

The late movement of the British army had left the garrison of Ninety Six and of Augusta exposed to the whole force of Greene, and he determined to direct his operations against them. Lee was ordered to proceed against the latter, while the general should march in person to the former.

The post at Ninety-Six was fortified. The principal work, which, from its form, was called the Star, and which was on the right of the village, consisted of sixteen salient and re-entering angles, and was surrounded by a dry ditch, fraize, and abbatis. On the left was a valley, through which ran a rivulet that supplied the place with water. This valley was commanded on one side by the town prison, which had been converted into a blockhouse, and on the other by a stockade fort, in which a blockhouse had been erected. The garrison, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Cruger, was ample for the extent of the place, but was furnished with only three pieces of artillery.

On evacuating Camden, Lord Rawdon had given directions that the garrison of Ninety-Six should retire to Augusta; but his messengers were intercepted; and Cruger, remaining without orders, determined to put his post in the best possible state of defence.

On the 22nd of May the American army, consisting of about one thousand continental troops, appeared before the town, and encamped in a wood, within cannon shot of the place. On the following night they broke ground, within seventy yards of the British works; but the besieged having mounted several guns in the star, made a vigorous sally under their protection, and drove the advanced party of the besiegers from their trenches, put several of them to the bayonet, and brought off their intrenching tools.

This sortie was made with such rapidity, that, though General Greene put his whole army in motion, the party making it had accomplished the object and retired into the fort, before he could support his troops in the trenches. After this check, the siege was conducted with more caution, but with indefatigable industry.

On the 8th of June, Lee rejoined the army with the troops under his command.

The day after the fall of fort Granby, that active officer proceeded with great celerity to join General Pickens, and lay siege to Augusta. On the march, he took possession of fort Golphin, on the northern bank of the Savannah, which surrendered on the 21st of May; immediately after which the operations against Augusta were commenced.

The place was bravely defended by Lieutenant Colonel Brown; but the approaches of the besiegers were so well conducted, that on the 5th of June he was reduced to the necessity of capitulating; and the prisoners, amounting to about three hundred, were conducted by Lee to the main army.

This reinforcement enabled General Greene, who had till then made his approaches solely against the star, to commence operations against the works on the left also. The direction of the advances to be made in that quarter was entrusted to Lieutenant Colonel Lee. While the besiegers urged their approaches in the confidence that the place must soon capitulate, Lord Rawdon received a reinforcement which enabled him once more to overrun the state of South Carolina.

On the third of June three regiments arrived from Ireland; and, on the seventh of that month, Lord Rawdon marched at the head of two thousand men to the relief of Ninety-Six. Greene received intelligence of his approach on the eleventh, and ordered Sumpter, to whose aid the cavalry was detached, to continue in his front, and to impede his march by turning to the best account every advantage afforded by the face of the country. But Lord Rawdon passed Sumpter below the junction of the Saluda and Broad rivers, after which that officer was probably unable to regain his front.

Greene had also intended to meet the British and fight them at some distance from Ninety-Six, but found it impossible to draw together such aids of militia as would enable him to execute that intention with any prospect of success. The only remaining hope was to press the siege so vigorously as to compel a surrender before Lord Rawdon could arrive.

In the execution of this plan, the garrison was reduced to extremities, when the near approach of his lordship was communicated to Cruger, by a loyalist who passed through the American lines, and extinguished every hope of carrying the place otherwise than by storm. Unwilling to relinquish a prize he was on the point of obtaining, Greene resolved to essay every thing which could promise success; but the works were so strong that it would be madness to assault them, unless a partial attempt to make a lodgement on one of the curtains of the star redoubt and at the same time to carry the fort on the left, should the first succeed.

The proper dispositions for this partial assault being made, Lieutenant Colonel Lee, at the head of the legion infantry and Kirkwood's company, was ordered to assault the works on the left of the town; while Lieutenant Colonel Campbell was to lead the first regiment of Maryland, and the first of Virginia, against the star redoubt. The lines of the third parallel were manned, and all the artillery opened on the besieged. About noon the detachments on this service marched cheerfully to the assault. Lee's attack on the left was successful. He forced the works in that quarter and took possession of them. June 18. But the resistance on the right was more determined, and Campbell, though equally brave, was less fortunate. Lieutenants Duval of Maryland, and Selden of Virginia, led the forlorn hope, and entered the ditch with great intrepidity; but its depth, and the height of the parapet opposed obstructions which could not be surmounted. After a severe conflict of more than half an hour, during which Lieutenants Duval and Selden were both badly wounded, and nearly all the forlorn hope were either killed or wounded, the assault was relinquished, and the few who remained alive were recalled from the ditch. The next day, Greene raised the siege, and, crossing the Saluda, encamped on Little river. The loss of the besieging army, in killed and wounded, amounted to one hundred and fifty-five men, among the former of whom was Captain Armstrong of Maryland. That of the garrison has been stated at eighty-five.

On the morning of the 21st of June, Lord Rawdon arrived at Ninety-Six; and, on the evening of the same day, marched in quest of the American army. In the preceding operations of the campaign, he had felt the want of cavalry so severely that, while at Monk's corner, and in Charleston, he had formed a corps of one hundred and fifty horse.

Greene, foreseeing that his active adversary would avail himself to the utmost of his superiority, had sent his sick and wounded northward; and, as soon as Rawdon had crossed the Saluda, he retreated towards Virginia. Lord Rawdon pursued him to the Ennore, whence he returned to Ninety-Six.

June 25. The retreat ceased with the pursuit. General Greene halted near the cross roads, on the north of Broad river.

As Rawdon retired, he was followed close by the legion as far as Ninety-Six, at which place he remained but two days. Still retaining the opinion that circumstances required him to contract his posts, he left the principal part of his army, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Cruger, to protect the loyalists while removing within those limits which were to be maintained by the British forces; and, at the head of less than one thousand men, marched in person towards the Congaree. June 29.

Supposing that his adversary intended to preserve the post at Ninety-Six, where the royalists were numerous, and to establish one or two on the Congaree, where provisions were more plentiful than in any other part of the state, Greene determined to interrupt the execution of the plan which he believed to have been formed. Leaving his sick and baggage at Wynnsborough, to be conducted to Camden, he marched with the utmost expedition for Friday's ferry on the Congaree, at which place Lord Rawdon had arrived two days before him. July. As Greene drew near to his enemy, a detachment from the legion under the command of Captain Eggleston, announced his approach by attacking a foraging party within a mile of the British camp, and bringing off a troop consisting of forty-five men, with their officers and horses. Rawdon retreated the next day to Orangeburg, where he formed a junction with a detachment from Charleston, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Stuart.

On the Congaree, Greene was reinforced by Sumpter and Marion with about one thousand men; and, on the 11th of July, marched towards Orangeburg with the intention of attacking the British army at that place. He arrived there the next day, but found it so strongly posted as to be unassailable. He offered battle, but prudence restrained him from attacking the enemy in his camp.

At this place, intelligence was received of the evacuation of Ninety-Six, and that Lieutenant Colonel Cruger was marching down to Orangeburg. The north branch of the Edisto, which, for thirty miles, was passable only at the place occupied by Rawdon, interposed an insuperable obstacle to any attempt on Cruger; and Greene thought it most adviseable to force the British out of the upper country by threatening their lower posts at Monk's corner and at Dorchester. Sumpter, Marion and Lee, were detached on this service; and, July 13. on the same day, Greene moved towards the high hills of Santee, a healthy situation, where he purposed to give some refreshment and repose to his harassed army, and where he hoped to be joined by a few continental troops and militia from North Carolina.

The detachments ordered against the posts in the north-eastern parts of the state, under the command of Sumpter, were not so completely successful as their numbers, courage, and enterprise deserved. The several corps took distinct routes, intending to fall on the different posts between Ashley and Cooper rivers, at the same time. That at Dorchester was broken up, on the approach of Lee, who captured horses, military stores, and baggage to a considerable amount, and obtained some trivial successes over the flying enemy. Lieutenant Colonel Wade Hampton, of the state cavalry, fell in with a body of mounted refugees, dispersed the whole, and made forty or fifty prisoners.

Sumpter advanced against Monk's corner. This post was defended by Lieutenant Colonel Coates with the 19th British regiment, and a troop of horse. He had taken possession of a brick church at a bridge over Biggin creek, the most northern of the water courses which form the west branch of Cooper river. After passing Biggin, the road to Charleston crosses first Wattoo, and then Quinby creek; neither of which are passable except at the bridges over which the road leads, and at a ferry over Quinby.

On the sixteenth, Sumpter approached Monk's corner, but, not supposing himself strong enough to hazard an attack until all his detachments should be collected, sent a party to sieze the bridge over Wattoo, and either to hold or to destroy it. This party being attacked by a superior force, retired from the bridge without completing its destruction, and without informing Sumpter that his orders had not been fully executed.

Marion had joined Sumpter. Lee arrived late in the evening, and the resolution was taken to attack Coates early next morning.

In the course of the night he set fire to the church, in order to destroy the stores which were collected in it, and commenced his march to Charleston, by the road east of Cooper. Having repaired the bridge over Wattoo, he met with no obstruction; and proceeded with his infantry on the road leading to Quinby bridge, directed his cavalry to take a road turning to the right, and crossing the creek at the ferry.

July 17.

About three next morning, the flames bursting through the roof of the church announced the retreat of the British; and the pursuit was immediately commenced. Sumpter was preceded by the legion, supported by the state cavalry. A detachment from this regiment followed the British horse, in the vain hope of overtaking the troop at the ferry, while Lee pursued the infantry. Within a short distance of the bridge, which is eighteen miles from Monk's corner, he perceived the rear guard of the British, consisting of about one hundred men, commanded by Captain Campbell, which the cavalry charged, sword in hand. They threw down their arms, and begged for quarter; upon which they were placed under the care of a few militia horsemen, and the American cavalry resumed the pursuit.

They had not proceeded far, when Lee was called to the rear, by information that the prisoners had been ordered to resume their arms. At this critical moment, Armstrong, at the head of the leading section, came in sight of Coates, who having passed the bridge, and loosened the planks, lay, unapprehensive of danger, intending to destroy it as soon as his rear guard should cross the creek. Armstrong, in obedience to orders, given in the expectation that he would overtake Coates before passing the creek, dashed over the bridge on the guard stationed at the opposite end with a howitzer, which he seized. In this operation, his horses threw off some of the loosened planks, and made a chasm, over which the following section, led by Lieutenant Carrington, leaped with difficulty. In doing this some other planks were thrown off, and the horses of the third section refused to take the leap. At this time Lee came up, and every effort was made to replace the planks, but without success. The creek was too deep and miry to afford foot hold to those who attempted to raise them from the water.

This halt revived the courage of the British soldiers, who returned to the support of their commander, then engaged in an equal conflict with the cavalry who had passed the bridge. These gallant men[1] finding themselves overpowered by numbers, and that their comrades could not support them, pressed over the causeway, and wheeling into the woods, made their escape.

After finding the impracticability of replacing the planks on the bridge, in attempting which, Doctor Irvin, surgeon of the legion cavalry, and several of the troopers were wounded, Lee withdrew from the contest, and moved some distance up the creek, to a ford where he was soon joined by the infantry of the legion.

Coates then completed the demolition of the bridge, and retired to an adjoining plantation, where he took possession of the dwelling house and out buildings that surrounded it.

As the Americans were obliged to make a considerable circuit, Sumpter, who unfortunately left his artillery behind, did not arrive on the ground till three in the afternoon, and at four the house was attacked. The fire was kept up chiefly by Marion's division, from a fence near the house, till evening, when the ammunition was exhausted, and the troops were called off. In the course of the night, it was perceived that the loss had fallen almost entirely on Marion. Great discontent prevailed, and many of the men left him. The infection was communicated to Sumpter's troops, and there being reason to fear the approach of Lord Rawdon, the enterprise was abandoned. Sumpter crossed the Santee; and the legion rejoined the army, then encamped at the high hills of that river.

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[1] Mr. Johnson states that Captain M'Cauley, of South Carolina, had joined Armstrong and Carrington Some of the troopers were killed on the bridge.

July 18.

The intense heat of this sultry season, demanded some relaxation from the unremitting toils which the southern army had encountered. From the month of January, it had been engaged in one course of incessant fatigue, and of hardy enterprise. All its powers had been strained, nor had any interval been allowed to refresh and recruit the almost exhausted strength and spirits of the troops.

The continued labours and exertions of all were highly meritorious, but the successful activity of one corps will attract particular attention. The legion, from its structure, was peculiarly adapted to the partisan war of the southern states; and, by being detached against the weaker posts of the enemy, had opportunities for displaying with advantage all the energies it possessed. In that extensive sweep which it made from the Santee to Augusta, which employed from the 15th of April to the 5th of June, this corps, acting in conjunction, first with Marion, afterwards with Pickens, and sometimes alone, had constituted an essential part of the force which carried five British posts, and made upwards of eleven hundred prisoners. Its leader, in the performance of these services, displayed a mind of so much fertility of invention and military resource, as to add greatly to his previous reputation as a partisan.

The whole army had exhibited a degree of activity, courage and patient suffering, surpassing any expectation that could have been formed of troops composed chiefly of new levies; and its general had manifested great firmness, enterprise, prudence, and skill.

The suffering sustained in this ardent struggle for the southern states was not confined to the armies. The inhabitants of the country felt all the miseries which are inflicted by war in its most savage form. Being almost equally divided between the two contending parties, reciprocal injuries had gradually sharpened their resentments against each other, and had armed neighbour against neighbour, until it became a war of extermination. As the parties alternately triumphed, opportunities were alternately given for the exercise of their vindictive passions. They derived additional virulence from the examples occasionally afforded by the commanders of the British forces. After overrunning Georgia and South Carolina, they seem to have considered those states as completely reannexed to the British empire; and they manifested a disposition to treat those as rebels, who had once submitted and again taken up arms, although the temporary ascendency of the continental troops should have induced the measure. One of these executions, that of Colonel Hayne, took place on the third of August, while Lord Rawdon[1] was in Charleston, preparing to sail for Europe. The American army being at this time in possession of great part of the country, the punishment inflicted on this gentleman was taken up very seriously by General Greene, and was near producing a system of retaliation. The British officers, pursuing this policy, are stated to have executed several of the zealous partisans of the revolution who fell into their hands. These examples had unquestionably some influence in unbridling the revengeful passions of the royalists, and letting loose the spirit of slaughter which was brooding in their bosoms. The disposition to retaliate to the full extent of their power, if not to commit original injury, was equally strong in the opposite party. When fort Granby surrendered, the militia attached to the legion manifested so strong a disposition to break the capitulation, and to murder the most obnoxious among the prisoners who were inhabitants of the country, as to produce a solemn declaration from General Greene, that any man guilty of so atrocious an act should be executed. When fort Cornwallis surrendered, no exertions could have saved Colonel Brown, had he not been sent to Savannah protected by a guard of continental troops. Lieutenant Colonel Grierson, of the royal militia, was shot by unknown marksmen; and, although a reward of one hundred guineas was offered to any person who would inform against the perpetrator of the crime, he could never be discovered. "The whole country," said General Greene in one of his letters, "is one continued scene of blood and slaughter."

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[1] The execution of Colonel Hayne has been generally ascribed to Lord Rawdon, and that gallant nobleman has been censured throughout America for an act which has been universally execrated. A letter addressed by him to the late General Lee, on receiving the memoirs of the southern war, written by that gentleman, which has been published in the "View of the Campaign of 1781, in the Carolinas, by H. Lee," gives the British view of that transaction, and exonerates Lord Rawdon from all blame. Lieutenant Colonel Balfour commanded, and Lord Rawdon sought to save Colonel Hayne.

Greene was too humane, as well as too judicious, not to discourage this exterminating spirit. Perceiving in it the total destruction of the country, he sought to appease it by restraining the excesses of those who were attached to the American cause.

At the high hills of Santee the reinforcements expected from North Carolina were received. The American army, counting every person belonging to it, was augmented to two thousand six hundred men; but its effective force did not exceed sixteen hundred.

After the retreat of General Greene from Orangeburg, Lord Rawdon was induced by ill health to avail himself of a permit to return to Great Britain, and the command of the British forces in South Carolina devolved on Lieutenant Colonel Stuart. He again advanced to the Congaree; and encamping near its junction with the Wateree, manifested a determination to establish a permanent post at that place. Though the two armies were within sixteen miles of each other on a right line, two rivers ran between them which could not be crossed without making a circuit of seventy miles; in consequence of which Lieutenant Colonel Stuart felt himself so secure, that his foraging parties were spread over the country. To restrain them, and to protect the inhabitants, General Greene detached Marion towards Combahee ferry, and Washington over the Wateree. Frequent skirmishes ensued, which, from the superior courage and activity of the American cavalry, uniformly terminated in their favour.

Finding that Lieutenant Colonel Stuart designed to maintain September. his important position on the Congaree, Greene prepared to recommence active operations. Breaking up his camp at the high hills of Santee, he crossed the Wateree near Camden, and marched towards Friday's ferry.

On being informed of his approach, the British army retired to Eutaw, where it was reinforced by a detachment from Charleston. Greene followed by slow and easy marches, for the double purpose of preserving his soldiers from the effects of fatigue under a hot sun, and of giving Marion, who was returning from a critical expedition to the Edisto, time to rejoin him. In the afternoon of the seventh that officer arrived; and it was determined to attack the British camp next day.

At four in the morning of the eighth, the American army moved from its ground, which was seven miles from Eutaw, in the following order: The legion of Lee and the state troops of South Carolina formed the advance. The militia moved next, and were followed by the regulars. The cavalry of Washington and the infantry of Kirkwood brought up the rear. The artillery moved between the columns.

At eight in the morning, about four miles from the British camp, the van fell in with a body of horse and foot, who were escorting an unarmed foraging party, and a brisk action ensued. The British were instantly routed. The cavalry made their escape at the sight of the legion dragoons, and the infantry were killed or taken. About forty, including their captain, were made prisoners. The foraging party which followed in the rear saved themselves by flight, on hearing the first musket. Supposing this party to be the van of the English, Greene arranged his army in order of battle.

The militia, commanded by Generals Marion and Pickens, composed the first line. The second was formed of the continental infantry. The North Carolina brigade, commanded by General Sumner, was placed on the right; the Virginians, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Campbell, formed the centre; and the Marylanders, commanded by Colonel Williams, the left. The legion of Lee was to cover the right flank; the state troops of South Carolina, commanded by Colonel Henderson, the left; and the cavalry of Washington, with the infantry of Kirkwood, formed the reserve. Captain Lieutenant Gaines, with two three-pounders, was attached to the first line; and Captain Brown, with two sixes, to the second.

The British line also was immediately formed. It was drawn up across the road, in an oblique direction, in a wood, on the heights near the Eutaw springs, having its right flank on Eutaw creek. This flank was also covered by a battalion commanded by Major Majoribanks which was posted in a thicket, in a line forming an obtuse angle with the main body. The left flank was protected by the cavalry commanded by Major Coffin, and by a body of infantry held in reserve. A detachment of infantry was pushed forward about a mile, with a field piece to employ the Americans until his arrangements should be completed.

The American van continuing to move forward, encountered the British advanced party; upon which Captain Lieutenant Gaines came up with his field pieces, which opened on the enemy with considerable effect. General Greene also ordered up his first line with directions to move on briskly, and to advance as they fired. As this line came into action, the legion formed on its right flank, and the state troops of South Carolina on its left.

The British advanced party was soon driven in; and the Americans, continuing to press forward, were engaged with the main body. Lieutenant Colonel Stuart, perceiving the materials of which this line was composed, and probably anticipating its speedy discomfiture, to avoid exposing his flanks to the American cavalry, had directed his troops not to change their position. His design was to meet the American regulars without any alteration of the arrangement originally made. But the militia, many of whom had frequently faced an enemy, being commanded by generals of experience and courage, exhibited a degree of firmness not common to that species of force, and maintained their ground with unexpected obstinacy. In the ardour of action, the order not to advance was disregarded, and the British pressed forward as the militia retired. The artillery which was placed in the road was well served on both sides, and did great execution till both the three-pounders commanded by Captain Lieutenant Gaines were dismounted. About the same time, one of the British shared the same fate.

When the militia gave way, Lee and Henderson still maintained the engagement on the flanks. General Sumner was ordered up to fill the place from which Marion and Pickens were receding; and his brigade, ranging itself with the legion infantry, and the state regiment of South Carolina, came into action with great intrepidity. The British, who had advanced upon the militia, fell back to their first ground, upon which Stuart ordered the corps of infantry posted in the rear of his left wing into the line, and directed Major Coffin with his cavalry to guard that flank. About this time Henderson received a wound which disabled him from keeping the field, and the command of his corps devolved on Lieutenant Colonel Hampton.

After sustaining the fire of the enemy with considerable resolution, Sumner's brigade began to give way, and the British rushed forward in some disorder. Greene then directed Williams and Campbell to charge with the bayonet, and at the same time ordered Washington to bring up the reserve, and to act on his left. Williams charged without firing a musket; but the soldiers of Campbell's regiment, being chiefly new levies, returned the fire of the enemy as they advanced. In this critical moment, Lee, perceiving that the American right extended beyond the British left, ordered Captain Rudolph, of the legion infantry, to turn their flank and give them a raking fire. This order was instantly executed with precision and effect. Charged thus both in front and flank, the British broke successively on the left, till the example was followed by all that part of the line. The Marylanders under Williams, had already used the bayonet, and before the troops opposed to them gave way, several had fallen on both sides, transfixed with that weapon.

The British left, when driven off the field, retreated through their encampment towards Eutaw creek, near which stood a three story brick house, surrounded with offices, and connected with a strongly enclosed garden, into which Major Sheridan, in pursuance of orders previously given by Lieutenant Colonel Stuart, threw himself with the New York volunteers. The Americans pursued them closely, and took three hundred prisoners and two pieces of cannon. Unfortunately for their hopes of victory, the refreshments found in camp furnished a temptation too strong to be resisted; and many of the soldiers left their ranks, and, under cover of the tents, seized the spirits and food within their view. The legion infantry, however, pressed the rear so closely as to make a serious struggle to enter the house with the British. The door was forcibly shut in their faces, and several British officers and men were excluded. These were made prisoners, and mixed with the Americans, so as to save them from the fire of the house while retiring from it.

As the British left gave way, Washington was directed to charge their right. He advanced with his accustomed impetuosity, but found it impossible, with cavalry, to penetrate the thicket occupied by Majoribanks. Perceiving an interval between the British right and the creek, he determined to pass through it round their flank and to charge them in the rear. In making the attempt, he received a fire which did immense execution. The British occupied a thicket almost impervious to horse. In attempting to force it, Lieutenant Stuart who commanded the leading section was badly wounded, his horse killed under him, and every man in his section killed or wounded. Captain Watts, the second in command, fell pierced with two balls. Colonel Washington was wounded, and his horse was killed. They fell together; and, before he could extricate himself, he was made a prisoner.

After nearly all the officers, and a large portion of the men were killed or wounded, the residue of the corps was drawn off by Captain Parsons, assisted by Lieutenant Gordon. Soon after the repulse of Washington, Lieutenant Colonel Hampton and Captain Kirkwood with his infantry, came up and renewed the attack on Majoribanks. Great efforts were made to dislodge him, but they were ineffectual. Finding it impracticable to employ horse to advantage on that ground, Hampton drew off his troops and retired to the road.

The corps commanded by Sheridan kept up a continual and destructive fire from the house in which they had taken shelter; and Greene ordered up the artillery to batter it. The guns were too light to make a breach in the walls, and, having been brought within the range of the fire from the house, almost every artillerist was killed, and the pieces were abandoned.

The firm stand made by Majoribanks, and the disorder which had taken place among a part of the Americans, gave Stuart an opportunity of rallying his broken regiments, and bringing them again into action. They were formed between the thicket occupied by Majoribanks, and the house in possession of Sheridan.

Major Coffin, who had repulsed the legion cavalry about the time the British infantry was driven off the field, still maintained a formidable position on their left; and no exertions could dislodge Majoribanks or Sheridan from the cover under which they fought. Perceiving that the contest was maintained on ground, and under circumstances extremely disadvantageous to the Americans, Greene withdrew them a small distance, and formed them again in the wood in which the battle had been fought. Thinking it unadviseable to renew the desperate attempt which had just failed, he collected his wounded, and retired with his prisoners to the ground from which he had marched in the morning, determined again to fight the British army when it should retreat from the Eutaws.

Every corps engaged in this hard fought battle received the applause of the general. Almost every officer whose situation enabled him to attract notice was named with distinction. "Never," he said, "was artillery better served;" but, "he thought himself principally indebted for the victory he had gained, to the free use made of the bayonet by the Virginians and Marylanders, and by the infantry of the legion and of Kirkwood." To Colonel Williams he acknowledged himself to be particularly indebted. He gave that praise too to the valour of his enemy which it merited. "They really fought," he said, "with courage worthy a better cause."

The loss on both sides bore a great proportion to the numbers engaged. That of the Americans was five hundred and fifty-five, including sixty officers. One hundred and thirty were killed on the spot. Seventeen commissioned officers were killed, and four mortally wounded. "This loss of officers," said the general, "is still more heavy on account of their value than their numbers."

Among the slain was Lieutenant Colonel Campbell, who received a mortal wound while leading the Virginia brigade to that bold and decisive charge which broke the adverse line.

The loss of the British army was stated by themselves at six hundred and ninety-three men, of whom only eighty-five were killed in the field. If this statement be correct,[1] the American dead greatly exceeded that of the adversary, which was probably the fact, as the carnage of the former, during their unavailing efforts to dislodge the latter from the house and strong adjoining ground, was immense.

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[1] The British accounts acknowledge only two hundred and fifty-seven missing; but General Greene, in his letter of the 11th of September, says, that including seventy wounded who were left at Eutaw, he made five hundred prisoners.

Each party had pretensions to the victory, and each claimed the merit of having gained it with inferior numbers. The truth probably is that their numbers were nearly equal.

Nor can the claim of either to the victory be pronounced unequivocal. Unconnected with its consequences, the fortune of the day was nearly balanced. But if the consequences be taken into the account, the victory unquestionably belonged to Greene. The result of this, as of the two preceding battles fought by him in the Carolinas, was the expulsion of the hostile army from the territory which was the immediate object of contest.

Four six-pounders, two of which had been taken in the early part of the day, were brought to play upon the house, and, being pushed so near as to be within the command of its fire, were unavoidably abandoned; but a three-pounder which had been also taken, was brought off by Captain Lieutenant Gaines, whose conduct was mentioned with distinction by General Greene. Thus the trophies of victory were divided.

The thanks of congress were voted to every corps in the army; and a resolution was passed for "presenting to Major General Greene," as an honourable testimony of his merit, a British standard, and a golden medal, emblematic of the battle and of his victory."

On the day succeeding the action, Lieutenant Colonel Stuart marched from Eutaw to meet Major M‘Arthur, who was con-
Nov. 9. ducting a body of troops from Charleston. The junction was effected about fourteen miles from Eutaw; and this movement saved M‘Arthur from Marion and Lee, who had been detached on the morning of the same day to intercept any reinforcement which might be coming from below. Stuart continued his retreat to Monk's corner, to which
Nov. 15. place he was followed by Greene, who, on finding that the numbers and position of the British army were such as to render an attack unadviseable, returned to the high hills of Santee.

The ravages of disease were added to the loss sustained in battle, and the army remained for some time in too feeble a condition for active enterprise.

The capitulation at Yorktown was soon followed by the evacuation of Wilmington, in North Carolina, and the British seemed to limit their views in the south to the country adjacent to the sea coast. As the cool season approached, the diseases of the American army abated; and Greene, desirous of partaking in the abundance of the lower country, marched from the high hills of Santee towards the Four Holes, a branch of the Edisto. Nov. 18. Leaving the army to be conducted by Colonel Williams, he proceeded in person at the head of his cavalry, supported by about two hundred infantry, towards the British posts at Dorchester, where six hundred and fifty regular troops and two hundred royal militia were understood to be stationed.

Though his march was conducted with the utmost secrecy, the country through which he passed contained so many disaffected, that it was impossible to conceal this movement; and intelligence of his approach was communicated to the officer commanding in Dorchester, the night before he reached that place. The advance, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Hampton, met a small party, which he instantly charged, and, after killing and taking several, drove the residue over the bridge under cover of their works. In the course of the following night, the stores at Dorchester were burnt, and the garrison retired to the Quarter House, where their principal force was encamped. Greene returned to the army at the Round O, at which place he purposed to await the arrival of the reinforcements marching from the north under the command of General St. Clair. In the mean time, General Marion and Lieutenant Colonel Lee were stationed on each side of Ashley, so as to cover the country between the Cooper and the Edisto; thus confining the influence of the British arms to Charleston neck, and the adjacent islands.[1]

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[1] During this campaign a very effective expedition against the Cherokees was conducted by General Pickens. When the struggle for South Carolina recommenced, those savages were stimulated to renew their incursions into the settlements of the whites. At the head of about four hundred mounted militia, Pickens penetrated into their country, burned thirteen of their villages, killed upwards of forty Indians, and took a number of prisoners, without the loss of a single man. On this occasion a

While in his camp at the Round O, General Greene was informed that large reinforcements from Ireland and from New York were expected by the army in Charleston. This intelligence excited the more alarm, because the term of service for which the levies from Virginia were engaged was about expiring, and no adequate measures had been taken for supplying their places. It proved untrue; but such was its impression, that the general addressed a letter to the governor of South Carolina, in which, after taking a serious view of the state of his army, he recommended that it should be recruited from the slaves. The governor thought the proposition of sufficient importance to be laid before the legislature, which was soon afterwards convened; but the measure was not adopted.

1782. On the fourth of January, General St. Clair, who conducted the reinforcement from the north, arrived in camp, and, five days afterward, General Wayne,[1] with his brigade, and the remnant of the third regiment of dragoons, commanded by Colonel White, was detached over the Savannah for the recovery of Georgia.

General Greene crossed the Edisto and took post six miles in advance of Jacksonborough, on the road leading to Charleston, Jan. 16. for the purpose of covering the state legislature, which assembled at that place on the eighteenth. Thus was civil government re-established in South Carolina, and that state restored to the union.

It is impossible to review this active and interesting campaign without feeling that much is due to General Greene; and that he amply justified the favourable opinion of the Commander-in-chief. He found the country completely conquered, and defended by a regular army estimated at four thousand men.

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new and formidable mode of attack was introduced. The militia horse rushed upon the Indians, and charged them sword in hand. Terrified at the rapidity of the pursuit, the Cherokees humbly sued for peace, which was granted on terms calculated to restrain depredations in future.

[1] In the judicious orders given to Wayne, Greene endeavoured to impress on that officer the importance of a course of conduct, always observed by himself, which might tend to conciliate parties. "Try," says he, "by every means in your power, to soften the malignity and dreadful resentments subsisting between the Whig and Tory; and put a stop as much as possible to that cruel custom of putting men to death after they surrender themselves prisoners. The practice of plundering you will endeavour to check as much as possible; and point out to the militia the ruinous consequences of the policy. Let your discipline be as regular and as rigid as the nature and constitution of your troops will admit."—2 *Johnson, 277.*

The inhabitants were so divided, as to leave it doubtful to which side the majority was attached. At no time did the effective continental force which he could bring into the field, amount to two thousand men; and of these a considerable part were raw troops. Yet he could keep the field without being forced into action; and by a course of judicious movement, and of hardy enterprise, in which invincible constancy was displayed, and in which courage was happily tempered with prudence, he recovered the southern states. It is a singular fact, well worthy of notice, which marks impressively the soundness of his judgment, that although he never gained a decisive victory, he obtained, to a considerable extent, even when defeated, the object for which he fought.

A just portion of the praise deserved by these achievements, is unquestionably due to the troops he commanded. These real patriots bore every hardship and privation[1] with a degree of patience and constancy which can not be sufficiently admired. And never was a general better supported by his inferior officers. Not shackled by men who, without merit, held stations of high rank obtained by political influence, he commanded young men of equal spirit and intelligence, formed under the eye of Washington, and trained in the school furnished in the severe service of the north, to all the hardships and dangers of war.

A peculiar importance was given to these successes in the south by the opinion that a pacific temper was finding its way into the cabinets of the belligerent powers of Europe. The communications from the court of Versailles rendered it probable that negotiations for peace would take place in the course of the ensuing winter; and dark hints had been given on the part of Great Britain to the minister of his most Christian Majesty, that all the American states could not reasonably expect to become independent, as several of them were subdued. Referring to the precedent of the low countries, it was observed that of the seventeen provinces originally united against the Spanish crown, only seven obtained their independence.

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[1] The distresses of the southern army were such that, if plainly described, truth would wear the appearance of fiction. They were almost naked and barefooted, frequently without food, and always without pay. That he might relieve them when in the last extremity, without diminishing the exertions of their general to derive support from other sources, by creating an opinion that supplies could be drawn from him, Mr. Morris, as was stated by himself in conversation with the author, employed an agent to attend the southern army as a volunteer, whose powers were unknown to General Greene. This agent was instructed to watch its situation; and, whenever it appeared impossible for the general to extricate himself from his embarrassments, to furnish him, on his pledging the public faith for repayment, with a draught on the financier for such a sum as would relieve the urgency of the moment. Thus was Greene occasionally rescued from impending ruin by aids which appeared providential, and for which he could not account.

Additional motives for exertion were furnished by other communications from the French monarch. These were that, after the present campaign, no farther pecuniary or military aids were to be expected from France. The situation of affairs in Europe would, it was said, demand all the exertions which that nation was capable of making; and the forces of his most Christian Majesty might render as much real service to the common cause elsewhere as in America.[1]

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[1] Secret Journals of Congress, vol. 2, p. 305, 399, 400, 452.

CHAPTER II

1782.

The splendid success of the allied arms in Virginia, and the great advantages obtained still farther south, produced no disposition in General Washington to relax those exertions which might yet be necessary to secure the great object of the contest. "I shall attempt to stimulate congress," said he, in a letter to General Greene written at Mount Vernon, "to the best improvement of our late success, by taking the most vigorous and effectual measures to be ready for an early and decisive campaign the next year. My greatest fear is, that viewing this stroke in a point of light which may too much magnify its importance, they may think our work too nearly closed, and fall into a state of languor and relaxation. To prevent this error, I shall employ every means in my power, and, if unhappily we sink into this fatal mistake, no part of the blame shall be mine."

On the 27th of November he reached Philadelphia, and congress passed a resolution granting him an audience on the succeeding day. On his appearance the President addressed him in a short speech, informing him that a committee was appointed to state the requisitions to be made for the proper establishment of the army, and expressing the expectation that he would remain in Philadelphia, in order to aid the consultations on that important subject.

The secretary of war, the financier, and the secretary of foreign affairs, assisted at these deliberations; and the business was concluded with unusual celerity.

A revenue was scarcely less necessary than an army; and it was obvious that the means for carrying on the war must be obtained, either by impressment, or by a vigorous course of taxation. But both these alternatives depended on the states; and the government of the union resorted to the influence of the Commander-in-chief in aid of its requisitions.

But no exertions on the part of America alone could expel the invading army. A superiority at sea was indispensable to the success of offensive operations against the posts which the British still held within the United States. To obtain this superiority, General Washington pressed its importance on the minister of France and commanding officers of the French troops, as well as on the Marquis de Lafayette, who was about to return to his native country.

The first intelligence from Europe was far from being calculated to diminish the anxieties still felt in America by the enlightened friends of the revolution. The parliament of Great Britain reassembled in November. The speech from the throne breathed a settled purpose to continue the war; and the addresses from both houses, which were carried by large majorities, echoed the sentiment.

In the course of the animated debates which these addresses occasioned, an intention was indeed avowed by some members of the administration to change their system. The plan indicated for the future was to direct the whole force of the nation against France and Spain; and to suspend offensive operations in the interior of the United States, until the strength of those powers should be broken. In the mean time, the posts then occupied by their troops were to be maintained.

This development of the views of administration furnished additional motives to the American government for exerting all the faculties of the nation, to expel the British garrisons from New York and Charleston. The efforts of the Commander-in-chief to produce these exertions were earnest and unremitting, but not successful. The state legislatures declared the inability of their constituents to pay taxes. Instead of filling the continental treasury, some were devising means to draw money from it; and some of those who passed bills imposing heavy taxes, directed that the demands of the state should be first satisfied, and that the residue only should be paid to the continental receiver. By the unwearied attention and judicious arrangements of the minister of finance, the expenses of the nation had been greatly reduced. The bank established in Philadelphia, and his own high character, had enabled him to support in some degree a system of credit, the advantages of which were incalculably great.

He had through the Chevalier de la Luzerne obtained permission from his most Christian Majesty to draw for half a million of livres monthly, until six millions should be received. To prevent the diversion of any part of this sum from the most essential objects, he had concealed the negotiations even from congress, and had communicated it only to the Commander-in-chief; yet, after receiving the first instalment, it was discovered that Doctor Franklin had anticipated the residue of the loan, and had appropriated it to the purposes of the United States. At the commencement of the year 1782, not a dollar remained in the treasury; and, although congress had required the payment of two millions on the 1st of April, not a cent had been received on the twenty-third of that month; and, so late as the 1st of June, not more than twenty thousand dollars had reached the treasury. Yet to the financier every eye was turned; to him the empty hand of every public creditor was stretched forth; and against him, instead of the state governments, the complaints and imprecations of every unsatisfied claimant were directed. In July, when the second quarter annual payment of taxes ought to have been received, the minister of finance was informed by some of his agents, that the collection of the revenue had been postponed in some of the states, in consequence of which the month of December would arrive before any money could come into the hands of the continental receivers. In a letter communicating this unpleasant intelligence to the Commander-in-chief, he added, "with such gloomy prospects as this letter affords, I am tied here to be baited by continual clamorous demands; and for the forfeiture of all that is valuable in life, and which I hoped at this moment to enjoy, I am to be paid by invective. Scarce a day passes in which I am not tempted to give back into the hands of congress the power they have delegated, and to lay down a burden which presses me to the earth. Nothing prevents me but a knowledge of the difficulties I am obliged to struggle under. What may be the success of my efforts God only knows; but to leave my post at present, would, I know, be ruinous. This candid state of my situation and feelings I give to your bosom, because you who have already felt and suffered so much, will be able to sympathise with me."

Fortunately for the United States, the temper of the British nation on the subject of continuing the war did not accord with that of its sovereign. That war, into which the people had entered with at least as much eagerness as the minister, had become almost universally unpopular.

Motions against the measures of administration respecting America were repeated by the opposition; and, on every experiment, the strength of the minority increased. At length, on the 27th of February, General Conway moved in the house of commons, "that it is the opinion of this house that a farther prosecution of offensive war against America would, under present circumstances, be the means of weakening the efforts of this country against her European enemies, and tend to increase the mutual enmity so fatal to the interests both of Great Britain and America." The whole force of administration was exerted to get rid of this resolution, but was exerted in vain; and it was carried. An address to the king, in the words of the resolution, was immediately voted, and was presented by the whole house. The answer of the crown being deemed inexplicit, it was on the 4th of March resolved, "that the house will consider as enemies to his majesty and the country, all those who should advise, or attempt a farther prosecution of offensive war on the continent of North America."

These votes were soon followed by a change of ministers, and by instructions to the officers commanding the forces in America, which conformed to them.

While General Washington was employed in addressing circular letters to the state governments, suggesting all those motives which might stimulate them to exertions better proportioned to the exigency, English papers containing the debates in parliament on the various propositions respecting America, reached the United States. Alarmed at the impression these debates might make, he introduced the opinions it was deemed prudent to inculcate respecting them, into the letters he was then about to transmit to the governors of the several states. "I have perused these debates," he said, "with great attention and care, with a view, if possible, to penetrate their real design; and upon the most mature deliberation I can bestow, I am obliged to declare it as my candid opinion, that the measure, in all its views, so far as it respects America, is merely delusory, having no serious intention to admit our independence upon its true principles, but is calculated to produce a change of ministers to quiet the minds of their own people, and reconcile them to a continuance of the war, while it is meant to amuse this country with a false idea of peace, to draw us from our connexion with France, and to lull us into a state of security and inactivity, which taking place, the ministry will be left to prosecute the war in other parts of the world with greater vigour and effect. Your excellency will permit me on this occasion to observe, that, even if the nation and parliament are really in earnest to obtain peace with America, it will undoubtedly be wisdom in us to meet them with great caution and circumspection, and by all means to keep our arms firm in our hands, and instead of relaxing one iota in our exertions, rather to spring forward with redoubled vigour, that we may take the advantage of every favourable opportunity, until our wishes are fully obtained. No nation yet suffered in treaty by preparing (even in the moment of negotiation) most vigorously for the field.

"The industry which the enemy is using to propagate their pacific reports, appears to me a circumstance very suspicious; and the eagerness with which the people, as I am informed, are catching at them, is, in my opinion, equally dangerous."

Early in May, Sir Guy Carleton, who had succeeded Sir Henry Clinton in the command of all the British forces in the United States, arrived at New York. Having been also appointed in conjunction with Admiral Digby, a commissioner to negotiate a peace, he lost no time in conveying to General Washington copies of the votes of the British parliament, and of a bill which had been introduced on the part of administration, authorizing his Majesty to conclude a peace or truce with those who were still denominated "the revolted colonies of North America." These papers, he said, would manifest the dispositions prevailing with the government and people of England towards those of America; and, if the like pacific temper should prevail in this country, both inclination and duty would lead him to meet it with the most zealous concurrence. He had addressed to congress, he said, a letter containing the same communications, and he solicited a passport for the person who should convey it.

At this time, the bill enabling the British monarch to conclude a peace or truce with America had not become a law; nor was any assurance given that the present commissioners were empowered to offer other terms than those which had been formerly rejected. General Carleton therefore could not hope that negotiations would commence on such a basis; nor be disappointed at the refusal of the passports he requested by congress, to whom the application was, of course, referred. The letter may have been written for the general purpose of conciliation, and of producing a disposition in the United States on the subject of hostilities, corresponding with that which had been expressed in the House of Commons. But the situation of the United States justified a suspicion of different motives; and prudence required that their conduct should be influenced by that suspicion. The repugnance of the king to a dismemberment of the empire was understood; and it was thought probable that the sentiments expressed in the House of Commons might be attributable rather to a desire of changing ministers, than to any fixed determination to relinquish the design of reannexing America to the crown.

Under these impressions, the overtures now made were considered as opiates, administered to lull the spirit of vigilance which the guardians of the public safety laboured to keep up, into a state of fatal repose; and to prevent those measures of security which it might yet be necessary to adopt.

This jealousy was nourished by all the intelligence received from Europe. The utmost address of the British cabinet had been employed to detach the belligerents from each other. The mediation of Russia had been accepted to procure a separate peace with Holland; propositions had been submitted both to France and Spain, tending to an accommodation of differences with each of those powers singly; and inquiries had been made of Mr. Adams, the American minister at the Hague, which seemed to contemplate the same object with regard to the United States. These political manœuvres furnished additional motives for doubting the sincerity of the English Cabinet. Whatever views might actuate the court of St. James on this subject, the resolution of the American government to make no separate treaty was unalterable.[1]

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[1] Secret journals of congress, v. 2, pp. 412, 418, 454.

But the public votes which have been stated, and probably his private instructions, restrained Sir Guy Carleton from offensive war; and the state of the American army disabled General Washington from making any attempt on the posts in possession of the British. The campaign of 1782 consequently passed away without furnishing any military operations of moment between the armies under the immediate direction of the respective commanders-in-chief.

Early in August a letter was received by General Washington from Sir Guy Carleton and Admiral Digby, which, among other communications manifesting a pacific disposition on the part of England, contained the information that Mr. Grenville was at Paris, invested with full powers to treat with all the parties at war, that negotiations for a general peace were already commenced, and that his Majesty had commanded his minister to direct Mr. Grenville, that the independence of the thirteen provinces should be proposed by him in the first instance, instead of being made a condition of a general treaty. But that this proposition would be made in the confidence that the loyalists would be restored to their possessions, or a full compensation made them for whatever confiscations might have taken place.

This letter was, not long afterwards, followed by one from Sir Guy Carleton, declaring that he could discern no further object of contest, and that he disapproved of all farther hostilities by sea or land, which could only multiply the miseries of individuals, without a possible advantage to either nation. In pursuance of this opinion, he had, soon after his arrival in New York, restrained the practice of detaching parties of Indians against the frontiers of the United States, and had recalled those which were previously engaged in those bloody incursions.

These communications appear to have alarmed the jealousy of the minister of France. To quiet his fears, congress renewed the resolution "to enter into no discussion of any overtures for pacification, but in confidence and in concert with his most Christian[1] Majetsy;" and again recommended to the several states to adopt such measures as would most effectually guard against all intercourse with any subjects of the British crown during the war.

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[1] Secret journals of congress, v. 3, p. 249.

The same causes which produced this inactivity in the north, operated to a considerable extent with the armies of the south.

When General Wayne entered Georgia, the British troops in that state retired to the town of Savannah; and the Americans advanced to Ebenezer. Though inferior to their enemy in numbers, they interrupted his communications with the country, and even burned some magazines which had been collected and deposited under the protection of his guns.

Not receiving the aids from the militia which he had expected, Wayne pressed Greene for reinforcements, which that officer was unable to furnish, until Lieutenant Colonel Posey arrived from Virginia with about two hundred men. He proceeded immediately to Georgia, and reached the camp at Ebenezer on the 1st of April.

These troops, though new levies, were veteran soldiers, who, having served the times for which they enlisted, had become the substitutes of men who were designated, by lot, for tours of duty they were unwilling to perform. Being commanded by old officers of approved courage and experience, the utmost confidence was to be placed in them; and Wayne, though still inferior to his enemy in numbers, sought for opportunities to employ them.

The Indians, who occupied the southern and western parts of Georgia, were in the habit of assembling annually at Augusta, for the purpose of receiving those presents which were indispensable to the preservation of British influence over them. The usual time for holding these meetings was arrived; but the Americans being in possession of Augusta, it was necessary to transfer them to a British post, and the Indians were invited to keep down the south side of the Altamaha to its mouth, whence they were to be conveyed through the inland passage to Savannah. Arrangements had been made for bringing a strong party of Creeks and Choctaws, assembled on the south side of Altamaha, to Harris's bridge, on the Ogechee, about seven miles from that town, and Colonel Brown marched at the head of a strong detachment to convoy them into it. The Indians having quarrelled, instead of proceeding to Ogechee, returned home, and Brown marched back his detachment. May 21.

Wayne received intelligence of this movement; and, determining to avail himself of the opportunity given by this division of his enemy to fight him in detail, immediately put his army in motion. He was soon informed that Brown was on his return, and would reach Savannah that night. Disregarding the danger of throwing himself with inferior numbers between the two divisions of the British army, he determined on hazarding an action, and his advance, consisting of a troop of Virginia cavalry, commanded by Captain Hughes and Lieutenant Boyer, and a light company of Virginia infantry, commanded by Captain Parker, entered the road along which Brown was marching about twelve at night, just as his front appeared in view. A vigorous charge was instantly made, which, being entirely unexpected, was completely successful. The British, struck with a panic, dispersed among the thickets and fled in all directions. Colonel Douglass and about forty men were killed, wounded, or taken. The American loss was five men killed and two wounded. The next day, after parading in view of Savannah, Wayne resumed his position at Ebenezer.

The resolution of Parliament against the farther prosecution of active war in America was followed by instructions to the officers commanding the armies of Britain, in consequence of which propositions for the suspension of hostilities were made in the southern department, about the time that they were rejected in the north. The same motives continuing to influence congress, they were rejected in the south also, and the armies still continued to watch each other with vigilance. To avoid surprise, Wayne frequently changed his ground, and was continually on the alert. While his whole attention was directed towards Savannah, an enemy entirely unlooked for came upon his rear, entered his camp in the night, and, had not his army been composed of the best materials, must have dispersed it.

A strong party of Creeks, led by a gallant warrior, Emistasigo, or Guristersego, instead of moving down on the south side of the Altamaha, passed through the centre of Georgia with the determination of engaging the American posts. Marching entirely in the night, through unfrequented ways, subsisting on meal made of parched corn, and guided by white men, they reached the neighbourhood of the American army then encamped at Gibbon's plantation, near Savannah, without being perceived, and made arrangements to attack it. In the night they emerged from the deep swamp in which they had been concealed, and, approaching the rear of the American camp with the utmost secrecy, reached it about three in the morning. The sentinel was killed before he could sound the alarm, and the first notice was given by the fire and the yell of the enemy. The Indians rushed into the camp, and, killing the few men they fell in with, seized the artillery. Fortunately some time was wasted in the attempt to turn the pieces on the Americans. Captain Parker, who commanded the light company, had been employed on a very fatiguing tour of duty near Savannah, and had returned that evening to camp. To allow his harassed soldiers some repose, he was placed in the rear near the artillery, and was asleep when the Indians entered the camp. Roused by the fire, and perceiving that the enemy was amidst them, he judiciously drew off his men in silence, and formed them with the quarter guard behind the house in which the general was quartered. Wayne was instantly on horseback, and, believing the whole garrison from Savannah to be upon him, determined to repulse the enemy or die in the attempt. Parker was directed to charge immediately with the bayonet, and orders were despatched to Posey, the commanding officer in camp, to bring up the troops without delay. The orders to Parker were so promptly executed, that Posey, although he moved with the utmost celerity, could not reach the scene of action in time to join in it. The light troops and quarter guard under Parker drove every thing before them at the point of the bayonet. The Indians, unable to resist the bayonet, soon fled, leaving their chief, his white guides, and seventeen of his warriors dead upon the spot. Wayne, who accompanied his light troops, now first discovered the character of his enemy, and adapted his pursuit to it. Yet only twelve prisoners were made. The general's horse was shot under him, and twelve privates were killed and wounded.[1]

June 23.

This sharp conflict terminated the war in Georgia. Information was soon given of the determination to withdraw the British troops from Savannah; and arrangements being made, with the sanction of the civil government, for the security of such individuals as might remain in town, the place was evacuated. The regular troops retired to Charleston, and Colonel Brown conducted his loyalists through the islands into Florida. Wayne was directed to rejoin General Greene.

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[1] In addition to the public documents and accounts, the author received a statement of this action in a letter from his friend, Captain Parker.

July 11.

In South Carolina the American army maintained its position in front of Jacksonborough, and that of the British was confined to Charleston and its immediate vicinity. The situation of the ground as well as the condition of his army, was unfavourable to offensive operations on the part of General Greene; and General Leslie, who commanded in Charleston, was not strong enough to attempt the recovery of the lower country. While the two armies continued to watch each other, occasional enterprises were undertaken by detachments, in some of which a considerable degree of merit was displayed. In one of them, the corps of Marion, its general, being attending in the legislature, was surprised and dispersed by the British Colonel Thompson; and in another, an English guard galley, mounting twelve guns, and manned with forty-three seamen, was captured by Captain Rudolph, of the legion.

From the possession of the lower country of South Carolina which was known to contain considerable quantities of rice and beef cattle, the army had anticipated more regular and more abundant supplies of food than it had been accustomed to receive. This hope was disappointed by the measures of the government.

The generals, and other agents, acting under the authority of congress, had been accustomed in extreme cases, which too frequently occurred, to seize provisions for the use of the armies. This questionable power had been exercised with forbearance, most commonly in concert with the government of the state, and under the pressure of such obvious necessity as carried its justification with it.

The war being transferred to the south at a time when the depreciation of paper money had deprived congress of its only fund, it became indispensably necessary to resort more generally to coercive means in order to procure subsistence for the troops.

Popular discontent was the natural consequence of this odious measure, and the feelings of the people were communicated to their representatives. After the termination of the very active campaign of 1781 in Virginia, the legislature of that state passed a law prohibiting all impressment, "unless it be by warrant from the executive in time of actual invasion;" and the assembly of South Carolina, during the session at Jacksonborough, also passed a law forbidding impressment and enacting, "that no other persons than those who shall be appointed by the governor for that purpose, shall be allowed or permitted to procure supplies for the army."

The effect of this measure was soon felt. The exertions of the agent appointed by the governor failed to procure subsistence for the troops, and General Greene, after a long course of suffering, was compelled to relieve his urgent wants by an occasional recurrence to means forbidden by the law.

Privations, which had been borne without a murmur under the excitement of active military operations, produced great irritation during the leisure which prevailed after the enemy had abandoned the open field; and, in the Pennsylvania line, which was composed chiefly of foreigners, the discontent was aggravated to such a point as to produce a treasonable intercourse with the enemy, in which a plot is understood to have been laid for seizing General Greene and delivering him to a detachment of British troops, which would move out of Charleston for the purpose of favouring the execution of the design. It was discovered when it is supposed to have been on the point of execution; and a serjeant Gornell, believed to be the chief of the conspiracy, was condemned to death by a court martial, and executed on the 22nd of April. Some others, among whom were two domestics in the general's family, were brought before the court on suspicion of being concerned in the plot, but the testimony was not sufficient to convict them; and twelve deserted the night after it was discovered. There is no reason to believe that the actual guilt of this transaction extended farther.

Charleston was held until the 14th of December. Previous to its evacuation, General Leslie had proposed a cessation of hostilities, and that his troops might be supplied with fresh provisions, in exchange for articles of the last necessity in the

American camp. The policy of government being adverse to this proposition, General Greene was under the necessity of refusing his assent to it, and the British general continued to supply his wants by force. This produced several skirmishes with foraging parties, to one of which importance was given by the death of Lieutenant Colonel Laurens, whose loss was universally lamented.

This gallant and accomplished young gentleman had entered into the family of the Commander-in-chief at an early period of the war, and had always shared a large portion of his esteem. Brave to excess, he sought every occasion to render service to his country, and to acquire that military fame which he pursued with the ardour of a young soldier, whose courage seems to have partaken largely of that romantic spirit which youth and enthusiasm produce in a fearless mind. No small addition to the regrets occasioned by his loss was derived from the reflection that he fell unnecessarily, in an unimportant skirmish, in the last moments of the war, when his rash exposure to the danger which proved fatal to him could no longer be useful to his country.

From the arrival of Sir Guy Carleton at New York, the conduct of the British armies on the American continent was regulated by the spirit then recently displayed in the house of commons; and all the sentiments expressed by their general were pacific and conciliatory. But to these flattering appearances it was dangerous to yield implicit confidence. With a change of men, a change of measures might also take place; and, in addition to the ordinary suggestions of prudence, the military events in the West Indies were calculated to keep alive the attention, and to continue the anxieties of the United States.

After the surrender of Lord Cornwallis, the arms of France and Spain in the American seas had been attended with such signal success, that the hope of annihilating the power of Great Britain in the West Indies was not too extravagant to be indulged. Immense preparations had been made for the invasion of Jamaica; and, early in April, Admiral Count de Grasse sailed from Martinique with a powerful fleet, having on board the land forces and artillery which were to be employed in the operations against that island. His intention was to form a junction with the Spanish Admiral Don Solano, who lay at Hispaniola; after which the combined fleet, whose superiority promised to render it irresistible, was to proceed on the important enterprise which had been concerted. On his way to Hispaniola, De Grasse was overtaken by Rodney, and brought to an engagement, in which he was totally defeated, and made a prisoner. This decisive victory disconcerted the plans of the combined powers, and gave security to the British islands. In the United States, it was feared that this alteration in the aspect of affairs might influence the councils of the English cabinet on the question of peace; and these apprehensions increased the uneasiness with which all intelligent men contemplated the state of the American finances.

It was then in contemplation to reduce the army, by which many of the officers would be discharged. While the general declared, in a confidential letter to the secretary of war, his conviction of the alacrity with which they would retire into private life, could they be placed on a situation as eligible as they had left to enter into the service, he added—"Yet I cannot help fearing the result of the measure, when I see such a number of men goaded by a thousand stings of reflection on the past, and of anticipation on the future, about to be turned on the world, soured by penury, and what they call the ingratitude of the public; involved in debts, without one farthing of money to carry them home, after having spent the flower of their days, and, many of them, their patrimonies, in establishing the freedom and independence of their country; and having suffered every thing which human nature is capable of enduring on this side of death. I repeat it, when I reflect on these irritating circumstances, unattended by one thing to sooth their feelings, or brighten the gloomy prospect, I cannot avoid apprehending that a train of evils will follow of a very serious and distressing nature.

"I wish not to heighten the shades of the picture so far as the real life would justify me in doing, or I would give anecdotes of patriotism and distress which have scarcely ever been paralleled, never surpassed in the history of mankind. But you may rely upon it, the patience and long sufferance of this army are almost exhausted, and there never was so great a spirit of discontent as at this instant. While in the field, I think it may be kept from breaking out into acts of outrage; but when we retire into winter quarters (unless the storm be previously dissipated) I can not be at ease respecting the consequences. It is high time for a peace."

To judge rightly of the motives which produced this uneasy temper in the army, it will be necessary to recollect that the resolution of October, 1780, granting half pay for life to the officers, stood on the mere faith of a government possessing no funds enabling it to perform its engagements. From requisitions alone, to be made on sovereign states, the supplies were to be drawn which should satisfy these meritorious public creditors; and the ill success attending these requisitions while the dangers of war were still impending, furnished melancholy presages of their unproductiveness in time of peace. In addition to this reflection, of itself sufficient to disturb the tranquillity which the passage of the resolution had produced, were other considerations of decisive influence. The dispositions manifested by congress itself were so unfriendly to the half pay establishment as to extinguish the hope that any funds the government might acquire, would be applied to that object. Since the passage of the resolution, the articles of confederation, which required the concurrence of nine states to any act appropriating public money, had been adopted; and nine states had never been in favour of the measure. Should the requisitions of congress therefore be respected, or should permanent funds be granted by the states, the prevailing sentiment of the nation was too hostile to the compensation which had been stipulated, to leave a probability that it would be substantially made. This was not merely the sentiment of the individuals then administering the government, which might change with a change of men. It was known to be the sense of the states they represented; and consequently the hope could not be indulged that, on this subject, a future congress would be more just, or would think more liberally. As therefore the establishment of that independence for which they had fought and suffered appeared to become more certain,—as the end of their toils approached—the officers became more attentive to their own situation; and the inquietude of the army increased with the progress of the negotiation.

In October, the French troops marched to Boston, in order to embark for the West Indies; and the Americans retired into winter quarters. The apparent indisposition of the British general to act offensively, the pacific temper avowed by the cabinet of London, and the strength of the country in which the American troops were cantoned, gave ample assurance that no military operations would be undertaken during the winter, which could require the continuance of General Washington in camp. But the irritable temper of the army furnished cause for serious apprehension; and he determined to forego every gratification to be derived from a suspension of his toils, in order to watch its discontents.

While the situation of the United States thus loudly called for peace the negotiations in Europe were protracted by causes which, in America, were almost unknown, and which it would have been dangerous to declare. Although, so far as respected the dismemberment of the British empire, the war had been carried on with one common design, the ulterior views of the belligerent powers were not only different, but, in some respects, incompatible with each other. To depress a proud and hated rival was so eagerly desired by the house of Bourbon, that France and Spain might be disposed to continue hostilities for the attainment of objects in which America could feel no common interest. This circumstance, of itself, furnished motives for prolonging the war, after the causes in which it originated were removed; and additional delays were produced by the discordant views which were entertained in regard to those claims which were the subject of negotiation. These were, the boundaries which should be assigned to the United States, and the participation which should be allowed them in the fisheries. On both these points, the wishes of France and Spain were opposed to those of America; and the cabinets both of Versailles and Madrid, seemed disposed to intrigue with that of London, to prevent such ample concessions respecting them, as the British minister might be inclined to make.

After an intricate negotiation, in which the penetration, judgment, and firmness, of the American commissioners were eminently displayed, eventual and preliminary articles were signed on the 30th of November. By this treaty every reasonable wish of America, especially on the questions of boundary and of the fisheries, was gratified.

The liberality of the articles on these points attests the success which attended the endeavours of the plenipotentiaries of the United States, to prove that the real interests of England required that America should become independent in fact, as well as name; and that every cause of future discord between the two nations should be removed.

The effect of this treaty was suspended until peace should be concluded between France and Great Britain. The connexions between their most Christian and Catholic Majesties not admitting of a separate peace on the part of either, the negotiations between the belligerent powers of Europe had been protracted by the persevering endeavours of Spain to obtain the cession of Gibraltar. At length, the formidable armament which had invested that fortress was repulsed with immense slaughter; after which the place was relieved by Lord Howe, and the besiegers abandoned the enterprise in despair. Negotiations were then taken up with sincerity; and preliminary articles of peace between Great Britain, France, and Spain, were signed on the 20th of January, 1783.

In America, the approach of peace, combined with other causes, produced a state of things alike interesting and critical. The officers who had wasted their fortunes and their prime of life in unrewarded service, fearing, with reason, that congress possessed neither the power nor the inclination to comply with its engagements to the army, could not look with unconcern at the prospect which was opening to them. In December, soon after going into winter quarters, they presented a petition to congress, respecting the money actually due to them, and proposing a commutation of the half pay stipulated by the resolutions of October, 1780, for a sum in gross, which, they flattered themselves, would encounter fewer prejudices than the half pay establishment. Some security that the engagements of the government would be complied with was also requested. A committee of officers was deputed to solicit the attention of congress to this memorial, and to attend its progress through the house.

Among the most distinguished members of the federal government, were persons sincerely disposed to do ample justice to the public creditors generally, and to that class of them particularly whose claims were founded in military service. But many viewed the army with jealous eyes, acknowledged its merit with unwillingness, and betrayed, involuntarily, their repugnance to a faithful observance of the public engagements. With this question, another of equal importance was connected, on which congress was divided almost in the same manner. One party was attached to a state, the other to a continental system. The latter laboured to fund the public debts on solid continental security, while the former opposed their whole weight to measures calculated to effect that object.

1783. March.

In consequence of these divisions on points of the deepest interest, the business of the army advanced slowly, and the important question respecting the commutation of their half pay remained undecided, when intelligence was received of the signature of the preliminary and eventual articles of peace between the United States and Great Britain.

The officers, soured by their past sufferings, their present wants, and their gloomy prospects—exasperated by the neglect which they experienced, and the injustice which they apprehended, manifested an irritable and uneasy temper, which required only a slight impulse to give it activity. To render this temper the more dangerous, an opinion had been insinuated that the Commander-in-chief was restrained, by extreme delicacy, from supporting their interests with that zeal which his feelings and knowledge of their situation had inspired. Early in March, a letter was received from their committee in Philadelphia, showing that the objects they solicited had not been obtained. On the 10th of that month, an anonymous paper was circulated, requiring a meeting of the general and field officers at the public building on the succeeding day at eleven in the morning; and announcing the expectation that an officer from each company, and a delegate from the medical staff would attend. The object of the meeting was avowed to be, "to consider the late letter from their representatives in Philadelphia, and what measures (if any) should be adopted to obtain that redress of grievances which they seemed to have solicited in vain."

On the same day an address to the army was privately circulated, which was admirably well calculated to work on the passions of the moment, and to lead to the most desperate resolutions. Full justice can not be done to this eloquent paper without inserting it entire. March 10.

"To the officers of the army.

"Gentlemen,

"A fellow soldier, whose interests and affections bend him strongly to you, whose past sufferings have been as great, and whose future fortune may be as desperate as yours, would beg leave to address you.

"Age has its claims, and rank is not without its pretensions, to advise but though unsupported by both, he flatters himself that the plain language of sincerity and experience will neither be unheard nor unregarded.

"Like many of you, he loved private life, and left it with regret. He left it, determined to retire from the field with the necessity that called him to it, and not until then—not until the enemies of his country, the slaves of power, and the hirelings of injustice, were compelled to abandon their schemes, and acknowledge America as terrible in arms as she had been humble in remonstrance. With this object in view, he has long shared in your toils, and mingled in your dangers. He has felt the cold hand of poverty without a murmur, and has seen the insolence of wealth without a sigh. But too much under the direction of his wishes, and sometimes weak enough to mistake desire for opinion, he has until lately—very lately—believed in the justice of his country. He hoped that, as the clouds of adversity scattered, and as the sunshine of peace and better fortune broke in upon us, the coldness and severity of government would relax, and that more than justice, that gratitude would blaze forth upon those hands which had upheld her in the darkest stages of her passage from impending servitude to acknowledged independence. But faith has its limits, as well as temper, and there are points beyond which neither can be stretched without sinking into cowardice, or plunging into credulity. This, my friends, I conceive to be your situation. Hurried to the very verge of both, another step would ruin you forever. To be tame and unprovoked when injuries press hard upon you, is more than weakness; but to look up for kinder usage without one manly effort of your own, would fix your character, and show the world how richly you deserve those chains you broke. To guard against this evil, let us take a review of the ground upon which we now stand, and from thence carry our thoughts forwards for a moment into the unexplored field of expedient.

"After a pursuit of seven long years, the object for which we set out is at length brought within our reach.—Yes, my friends, that suffering courage of yours was active once.—It has conducted the United States of America through a doubtful and a bloody war.—It has placed her in the chair of independency; and peace returns again to bless—whom?—A country willing to redress your wrongs, cherish your worth, and reward your services? A country courting your return to private life with tears of gratitude and smiles of admiration—longing to divide with you that independency which your gallantry has given, and those riches which your wounds have preserved? Is this the case? Or is it rather a country that tramples upon your rights, disdains your cries, and insults your distresses? Have you not more than once suggested your wishes and made known your wants to congress? Wants and wishes which gratitude and policy would have anticipated rather than evaded; and have you not lately, in the meek language of entreating memorials, begged from their justice what you could not longer expect from their favour? How have you been answered? Let the letter which you are called to consider to-morrow reply.

"If this then be your treatment while the swords you wear are necessary for the defence of America, what have you to expect from peace, when your voice shall sink, and your strength dissipate by division? When those very swords, the instruments and companions of your glory shall be taken from your sides, and no remaining mark of military distinction left but your wants, infirmities and scars? Can you then consent to be the only sufferers by this revolution, and, retiring from the field, grow old in poverty, wretchedness and contempt? Can you consent to wade through the vile mire of dependency, and owe the miserable remnant of that life to charity which has hitherto been spent in honour? If you can—go—and carry with you the jest of tories, and the scorn of whigs;—the ridicule, and, what is worse, the pity of the world. Go—starve and be forgotten. But if your spirit should revolt at this, if you have sense enough to discover, and spirit enough to oppose, tyranny under whatever garb it may assume; whether it be the plain coat of republicanism, or the splendid robe of royalty; if you have yet learned to discriminate between a people and a cause, between men and principles,—awake; attend to your situation and redress yourselves. If the present moment be lost, every future effort is in vain; and your threats then will be as empty as your entreaties now.

"I would advise you therefore to come to some final opinion upon what you can bear, and what you will suffer. If your determination be in any proportion to your wrongs, carry your appeal from the justice to the fears of the government. Change the milk-and-water style of your last memorial. Assume a bolder tone,—decent, but lively, spirited, and determined; and suspect the man who would advise to more moderation and longer forbearance. Let two or three men who can feel as well as write, be appointed to draw up your *last remonstrance;* for I would no longer give it the sueing, soft, unsuccessful epithet of memorial. Let it be represented in language that will neither dishonour you by its rudeness, nor betray you by its fears, what has been promised by congress, and what has been performed; —how long and how patiently you have suffered;—how little you have asked, and how much of that little has been denied. Tell them that, though you were the first, and would wish to be the last to encounter danger; though despair itself can never drive you into dishonour, it may drive you from the field;—that the wound often irritated and never healed, may at length become incurable; and that the slightest mark of indignity from congress now must operate like the grave, and part you forever; that in any political event, the army has its alternative. If peace, that nothing shall separate you from your arms but death; if war, that courting the auspices, and inviting the directions of your illustrious leader, you will retire to some unsettled country, smile in your turn, and 'mock when their fear cometh on.'

But let it represent also that, should they comply with the request of your late memorial, it would make you more happy and the more respectable. That while war should continue you would follow their standard into the field; and when it came to an end, you would withdraw into the shade of private life, and give the world another subject of wonder and applause; —an army victorious over its enemies, victorious over itself."

Persuaded as the officers in general were of the indisposition of government to remunerate their services, this eloquent and impassioned address, dictated by genius and by feeling, found in almost every bosom a kindred though latent sentiment prepared to receive its impression. Quick as the train to which a torch is applied, the passions caught its flame, and nothing seemed to be required by the assemblage proposed for the succeeding day, to communicate the conflagration to the combustible mass, and to produce an explosion ruinous to the army and to the nation.

Fortunately, the Commander-in-chief was in camp. His characteristic firmness and decision did not forsake him in this crisis. The occasion required that his measures should be firm, but prudent and conciliatory,—evincive of his fixed determination to oppose any rash proceedings, but calculated to assuage the irritation which was excited, and to restore confidence in government.

Knowing well that it was much easier to avoid intemperate measures than to correct them, he thought it of essential importance to prevent the immediate meeting of the officers; but knowing also that a sense of injury and a fear of injustice had made a deep impression on them, and that their sensibilities were all alive to the proceedings of congress on their memorial, he thought it more adviseable to guide their deliberations on that interesting subject, than to discountenance them.

With these views, he noticed in his orders, the anonymous paper proposing a meeting of the officers, and expressed his conviction that their good sense would secure them from paying any "attention to such an irregular invitation; but his own duty, he conceived, as well as the reputation and true interest of the army, required his disapprobation of such disorderly proceedings. At the same time, he requested the general and field officers, with one officer from each company, and a proper representation from the staff of the army, to assemble at twelve on Saturday, the 15th, at the new building, to hear the report of the committee deputed by the army to congress. After mature deliberation they will devise what farther measures ought to be adopted as most rational and best calculated to obtain the just and important object in view." The senior officer in rank present was directed to preside, and report the result of the deliberations to the Commander-in-chief.

The day succeeding that on which these orders were published a second anonymous address appeared, from the same pen which had written the first. Its author, acquainted with the discontents of the army, did not seem to despair of impelling the officers to the desired point. He affected to consider the orders in a light favourable to his views:—"as giving system to their proceedings, and stability to their resolves."

But Washington would not permit himself to be misunderstood. The interval between his orders and the general meeting they invited, was employed in impressing on those officers individually who possessed the greatest share of the general confidence, a just sense of the true interests of the army; and the whole weight of his influence was exerted to calm the agitations of the moment, and conduct them to a happy termination. This was a work of no inconsiderable difficulty. So convinced were many that government designed to deal unfairly by them, that only the reliance they placed on their general, and their attachment to his person and character, could have moderated their resentments so far as to induce them to adopt the measures he recommended.

On the 15th, the convention of officers assembled, and General Gates[1] took the chair. The Commander-in-chief then addressed them in the following terms.

"Gentlemen—

"By an anonymous summons, an attempt has been made to convene you together. How inconsistent with the rules of propriety, how unmilitary, and how subversive of all order and discipline, let the good sense of the army decide.

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[1] By a resolution of the preceding year, the inquiry into his conduct had been dispensed with, and he had been restored to his command in the army.

"In the moment of this summons, another anonymous production was sent into circulation, addressed more to the feelings and passions than to the judgment of the army. The author of the piece is entitled to much credit for the goodness of his pen; and I could wish he had as much credit for the rectitude of his heart; for as men see through different optics, and are induced by the reflecting faculties of the mind, to use different means to attain the same end, the author of the address should have had more charity, than to mark for suspicion the man who should recommend moderation and longer forbearance; or, in other words, who should not think as he thinks, and act as he advises. But he had another plan in view, in which candour and liberality of sentiment, regard to justice, and love of country, have no part; and he was right to insinuate the darkest suspicion to effect the blackest design. That the address was drawn with great art, and is designed to answer the most insidious purposes; that it is calculated to impress the mind with an idea of premeditated injustice in the sovereign power of the United States, and rouse all those resentments which must unavoidably flow from such a belief; that the secret mover of this scheme, whoever he may be, intended to take advantage of the passions, while they were warmed by the recollection of past distresses, without giving time for cool deliberate thinking, and that composure of mind which is so necessary to give dignity and stability to measures, is rendered too obvious by the mode of conducting the business to need other proof than a reference to the proceedings.

"Thus much, gentlemen, I have thought it incumbent on me to observe to you, to show upon what principles I opposed the irregular and hasty meeting which was proposed to have been held on Tuesday last, and not because I wanted a disposition to give you every opportunity consistent with your own honour, and the dignity of the army, to make known your grievances. If my conduct heretofore has not evinced to you, that I have been a faithful friend to the army, my declaration of it at the time would be equally unavailing and improper. But as I was among the first who embarked in the cause of our common country; as I have never left your side one moment but when called from you on public duty; as I have been the constant companion and witness of your distresses, and not among the last to feel and acknowledge your merits; as I have ever considered my own military reputation as inseparably connected with that of the army; as my heart has ever expanded with joy when I have heard its praises, and my indignation has arisen when the mouth of detraction has been opened against it; it can scarcely be supposed, at this last stage of the war, that I am indifferent to its interests. But how are they to be promoted? The way is plain, says the anonymous addresser.—If war continues, remove into the unsettled country; there establish yourselves, and leave an ungrateful country to defend itself! But who are they to defend? Our wives, our children, our farms and other property which we leave behind us? Or, in this state of hostile separation, are we to take the two first (the latter can not be removed) to perish in a wilderness with hunger, cold and nakedness?

" 'If peace takes place, never sheath your swords,' says he, 'until you have obtained full and ample justice.' This dreadful alternative of either deserting our country in the extremest hour of her distress, or turning our arms against it, which is the apparent object, unless congress can be compelled into instant compliance, has something so shocking in it, that humanity revolts at the idea. My God! what can this writer have in view by recommending such measures. Can he be a friend to the army? Can he be a friend to this country? Rather is he not an insidious foe: some emissary, perhaps, from New York, plotting the ruin of both, by sowing the seeds of discord and separation between the civil and military powers of the continent? And what a compliment does he pay to our understandings, when he recommends measures, in either alternative, impracticable in their nature? But here, gentlemen, I will drop the curtain, because it would be as imprudent in me to assign my reasons for this opinion, as it would be insulting to your conception to suppose you stood in need of them. A moment's reflection will convince every dispassionate mind of the physical impossibility of carrying either proposal into execution. There might gentlemen, be an impropriety in my taking notice, in this address to you, of an anonymous production,—but the manner in which that performance has been introduced to the army, together with some other circumstances, will amply justify my observations on the tendency of that writing.

"With respect to the advice given by the author, to suspect the man who shall recommend moderate measures and longer forbearance, I spurn it, as every man who regards that liberty, and reveres that justice for which we contend, undoubtedly must; for if men are to be precluded from offering their sentiments on a matter which may involve the most serious and alarming consequences that can invite the consideration of mankind, reason is of no use to us. The freedom of speech may be taken away, and dumb and silent, we may be led like sheep to the slaughter. I can not in justice to my own belief, and what I have great reason to conceive is the intention of congress, conclude this address, without giving it as my decided opinion, that that honourable body entertain exalted sentiments of the services of the army, and, from a full conviction of its merits and sufferings, will do it complete justice. That their endeavours to discover and establish funds for this purpose have been unwearied, and will not cease until they have succeeded, I have not a doubt.

"But, like all other large bodies, where there is a variety of different interests to reconcile, their determinations are slow. Why then should we distrust them? And, in consequence of that distrust, adopt measures which may cast a shade over that glory which has been so justly acquired, and tarnish the reputation of an army which is celebrated through all Europe for its fortitude and patriotism? And for what is this done? To bring the object we seek nearer? No: most certainly, in my opinion, it will cast it at a greater distance. For myself, (and I take no merit in giving the assurance, being induced to it from principles of gratitude, veracity and justice, and a grateful sense of the confidence you have ever placed in me,) a recollection of the cheerful assistance, and prompt obedience I have experienced from you, under every vicissitude of fortune, and the sincere affection I feel for an army I have so long had the honour to command, will oblige me to declare in this public and solemn manner, that in the attainment of complete justice for all your toils and dangers, and in the gratification of every wish, so far as may be done consistently with the great duty I owe my country, and those powers we are bound to respect, you may freely command my services to the utmost extent of my abilities.

"While I give these assurances, and pledge myself in the most unequivocal manner to exert whatever abilities I am possessed of in your favour, let me entreat you, gentlemen, on your part, not to take any measures which, viewed in the calm light of reason, will lessen the dignity, and sully the glory you have hitherto maintained. Let me request you to rely on the plighted faith of your country, and place a full confidence in the purity of the intentions of congress;—that, previous to your dissolution as an army, they will cause all your accounts to be fairly liquidated, as directed in the resolutions which were published to you two days ago; and that they will adopt the most effectual measures in their power to render ample justice to you for your faithful and meritorious services. And let me conjure you, in the name of our common country, as you value your own honour, as you respect the rights of humanity, and as you regard the military and national character of America, to express your utmost horror and detestation of the man who wishes, under any specious pretences, to overturn the liberties of our country, and who wickedly attempts to open the flood gates of civil discord, and deluge our rising empire in blood.

"By thus determining, and thus acting, you will pursue the plain and direct road to the attainment of your wishes; you will defeat the insidious designs of our enemies, who are compelled to resort from open force to secret artifice. You will give one more distinguished proof of unexampled patriotism and patient virtue, rising superior to the pressure of the most complicated suffering; and you will by the dignity of your conduct, afford occasion for posterity to say, when speaking of the glorious example you have exhibited to mankind, had this day been wanting, the world had never seen the last stage of perfection to which human nature is capable of attaining."

These sentiments from a person whom the army had been accustomed to love, to revere, and to obey; the solidity of whose judgment, and the sincerity of whose zeal for their interests, were alike unquestioned, could not fail to be irresistible. No person was hardy enough to oppose the advice he had given;

and the general impression was apparent. A resolution moved by General Knox, and seconded by Brigadier General Putnam, "assuring him that the officers reciprocated his affectionate expressions with the greatest sincerity of which the human heart is capable," was unanimously voted. On the motion of General Putnam, a committee consisting of General Knox, Colonel Brooks and Captain Howard was then appointed, to prepare resolutions on the business before them, and to report in half an hour. The report of the committee being brought in and considered, the following resolutions were passed.

"Resolved unanimously, that at the commencement of the present war, the officers of the American army engaged in the service of their country from the purest love and attachment to the rights and privileges of human nature; which motives still exist in the highest degree; and that no circumstances of distress or danger shall induce a conduct that may tend to sully the reputation and glory which they have acquired at the price of their blood, and eight years faithful services.

"Resolved unanimously, that the army continue to have an unshaken confidence in the justice of congress and their country, and are fully convinced that the representatives of America will not disband or disperse the army until their accounts are liquidated, the balances accurately ascertained, and adequate funds established for payment; and in this arrangement, the officers expect that the half pay, or a commutation for it, shall be efficaciously comprehended.

"Resolved unanimously, that his excellency the Commander-in-chief, be requested to write to his excellency the president of congress, earnestly entreating the most speedy decision of that honourable body upon the subject of our late address, which was forwarded by a committee of the army, some of whom are waiting upon congress for the result. In the alternative of peace or war, this event would be highly satisfactory, and would produce immediate tranquillity in the minds of the army, and prevent any farther machinations of designing men, to sow discord between the civil and military powers of the United States.

"On motion, resolved unanimously, that the officers of the American army view with abhorrence and reject with disdain, the infamous propositions contained in a late anonymous address to the officers of the army, and resent with indignation the secret attempts of some unknown person to collect the officers together in a manner totally subversive of all discipline and good order.

"Resolved unanimously, that the thanks of the officers of the army be given to the committee who presented to congress the late address of the army; for the wisdom and prudence with which they have conducted that business; and that a copy of the proceedings of this day be transmitted by the president to Major General M'Dougal; and that he be requested to continue his solicitations at congress until the objects of his mission are accomplished."

The storm which had been raised so suddenly and unexpectedly being thus happily dissipated, the Commander-in-chief exerted all his influence in support of the application the officers had made to congress. The following letter, written by him on the occasion, will show that he was not impelled to this measure by the engagements he had entered into more strongly than by his feelings.

"The result of the proceedings of the grand convention of the officers which I have the honour of enclosing to your excellency for the inspection of congress, will, I flatter myself, be considered as the last glorious proof of patriotism which could have been given by men who aspired to the distinction of a patriot army; and will not only confirm their claim to the justice, but will increase their title to the gratitude of their country.

"Having seen the proceedings on the part of the army terminate with perfect unanimity, and in a manner entirely consonant to my wishes, being impressed with the liveliest sentiments of affection for those who have so long, so patiently, and so cheerfully, suffered and fought under my direction; having from motives of justice, duty, and gratitude, spontaneously offered myself as an advocate for their rights; and having been requested to write to your excellency, earnestly entreating the most speedy decision of congress upon the subjects of the late address from the army to that honourable body; it now only remains for me to perform the task I have assumed, and to intercede in their behalf, as I now do, that the sovereign power will be pleased to verify the predictions I have pronounced of, and the confidence the army have reposed in, the justice of their country.

"And here I humbly conceive it is altogether unnecessary (while I am pleading the cause of an army which have done and suffered more than any other army ever did in the defence of the rights and liberties of human nature) to expatiate on their claims to the most ample compensation for their meritorious services, because they are perfectly known to the whole world, and because (although the topics are inexhaustible) enough has already been said on the subject. To prove these assertions, to evince that my sentiments have ever been uniform, and to show what my ideas of the rewards in question have always been, I appeal to the archives of congress, and call on those sacred deposits to witness for me. And in order that my observations and arguments in favour of a future adequate provision for the officers of the army may be brought to remembrance again, and considered in a single point of view, without giving congress the trouble of having recourse to their files, I will beg leave to transmit herewith an extract from a representation made by me to a committee of congress, so long ago as the 20th of January, 1778, and also the transcript of a letter to the president of congress, dated near Passaic falls, October the 11th, 1780.

"That in the critical and perilous moment when the last mentioned communication was made, there was the utmost danger a dissolution of the army would have taken place unless measures similar to those recommended had been adopted, will not admit a doubt. That the adoption of the resolution granting half pay for life has been attended with all the happy consequences I foretold, so far as respected the good of the service, let the astonishing contrast between the state of the army at this instant and at the former period, determine. And that the establishment of funds, and security of the payment of all the just demands of the army, will be the most certain means of preserving the national faith, and future tranquillity of this extensive continent, is my decided opinion.

"By the preceding remarks, it will readily be imagined that, instead of retracting and reprehending (from farther experience and reflection) the mode of compensation so strenuously urged in the enclosures, I am more and more confirmed in the sentiment; and if in the wrong, suffer me to please myself in the grateful delusion. For if, besides the simple payment of their wages, a farther compensation is not due to the sufferings and sacrifices of the officers, then have I been mistaken indeed. If the whole army have not merited whatever a grateful people can bestow, then have I been beguiled by prejudice, and built opinion on the basis of error. If this country should not in the event perform every thing which has been requested in the late memorial to congress, then will my belief become vain, and the hope that has been excited void of foundation. 'And if (as has been suggested for the purpose of inflaming their passions) the officers of the army are to be the only sufferers by this revolution; if, retiring from the field, they are to grow old in poverty, wretchedness, and contempt; if they are to wade through the vile mire of dependency, and owe the miserable remnant of that life to charity which has hitherto been spent in honour,' then shall I have learned what ingratitude is; then shall I have realized a tale which will embitter every moment of my future life.

"But I am under no such apprehensions. A country rescued by their arms from impending ruin, will never leave unpaid the debt of gratitude.

"Should any intemperate and improper warmth have mingled itself among the foregoing observations, I must entreat your excellency and congress that it may be atributed to the effusions of an honest zeal in the best of causes, and that my peculiar situation may be my apology; and I hope I need not, on this momentous occasion, make any new protestations of disinterestedness, having ever renounced for myself the idea of pecuniary reward. The consciousness of having attempted faithfully to discharge my duty, and the approbation of my country, will be a sufficient recompense for my services."

These proceedings of the army produced a concurrence of nine states in favour of a resolution commuting the half pay into a sum in gross equal to five years full pay; immediately after the passage of which, the fears still entertained in America that the war might continue, were dissipated by a letter from the Marquis de Lafayette, announcing a gen-

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eral peace. This intelligence, though not official, was certain; and orders were immediately issued, recalling all armed vessels cruising under the authority of the United States. Early in April, the copy of a declaration published in Paris, and signed by the American commissioners, announcing the exchange of ratifications of the preliminary articles between Great Britain and France, was received; and on the 19th of that month, the cessation[1] of hostilities was proclaimed.

The attention of congress might now be safely turned to the reduction of the army. This, in the empty state of the treasury, was a critical operation. In addition to the anxieties which the officers would naturally feel respecting their provision for the future, which of necessity remained unsecure, large arrears of pay were due to them, the immediate receipt of part of which was required by the most urgent wants. To disband an army to which the government was greatly indebted, without furnishing the individuals who composed it with the means of conveyance to their respective homes, was a perilous measure; and congress was unable to advance the pay of a single month.

Although eight millions had been required for the year 1782, the payments into the public treasury had amounted to only four hundred and twenty thousand and thirty-one dollars, and twenty-nine ninetieths; and the foreign loans had not been sufficient to defray expenses it was impossible to avoid, at the close of that year, the expenditures of the superintendent of the finances had exceeded his receipts four hundred and four thousand seven hundred and thirteen dollars and nine ninetieths; and the excess continued to increase rapidly.

Congress urged the states to comply so far with the requisitions as to enable the superintendent of the finances to advance a part of the arrears due to the soldiers; but, as the foreign danger diminished, they became still less attentive to these demands; and the financier was under the necessity of making farther anticipations of the revenue. Measures were taken to advance three months pay in his notes; but, before they could be prepared, orders were issued for complying with a resolution of Congress for granting unlimited furloughs to the non-commissioned officers and privates who were engaged to serve during the war. These orders produced a serious alarm. The generals, and officers commanding regiments and corps cantoned on the Hudson, assembled, and presented an address to the Commander-in-chief, in which the most ardent affection to his person, and confidence in his attachment to the interests of the army, were mingled with expressions of profound duty and respect for the government. But they declared that, after the late explanation on their claims, they had confidently expected that their accounts would be liquidated, the balances ascertained, and adequate funds for the payment of those balances provided, before they should be dispersed or disbanded.

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[1] See note, No. I. at the end of the volume.

Bound to the army by the strongest ties of affection and gratitude, intimately convinced of the justice of their claims, and of the patriotic principles by which they were influenced, the general was induced by sentiment not less than by prudence, to regard this application. He returned an answer, on the succeeding day, in which, after declaring "that as no man could possibly be better acquainted than himself with the past merits and services of the army, so no one could possibly be more strongly impressed with their present ineligible situation; feel a keener sensibility at their distresses; or more ardently desire to alleviate or remove them." He added, "although the officers of the army very well know my official situation, that I am only a servant of the public, and that it is not for me to dispense with orders which it is my duty to carry into execution, yet as furloughs in all services are considered as a matter of indulgence and not of compulsion, as congress, I am persuaded, entertain the best disposition towards the army; and as I apprehend in a very short time, the two principal articles of complaint will be removed; until the farther pleasure of congress can be known, I shall not hesitate to comply with the wishes of the army, under these reservations only, that officers sufficient to conduct the men who choose to receive furloughs, will attend them, either on furlough or by detachment."

This answer satisfied the officers. The utmost good temper was manifested; and the arrangements for retiring on furlough were made without a murmur. In the course of the summer, a considerable proportion of the troops enlisted for three years were also permitted to return to their homes; and, in October, a proclamation was issued by congress, declaring all those who had engaged for the war to be discharged on the third of December.

While these excellent dispositions were manifested by the veterans serving under the immediate eye of their patriot chief, the government was exposed to insult and outrage from the mutinous spirit of a small party of new levies. About eighty men of this description belonging to Pennsylvania, were stationed at Lancaster. Revolting against the authority of their officers, they marched in a body to Philadelphia, with the avowed purpose of obtaining redress of their grievances from the executive council of the state. The march of these insolent mutineers was not obstructed; and, after arriving in Philadelphia, their numbers were augmented by the junction of some troops quartered in the barracks. They then marched in military parade, with fixed bayonets, to the state-house, in which congress and the executive council of the state were sitting; and, after placing sentinels at the doors, sent in a written message, threatening the executive of the state with the vengeance of an enraged soldiery, if their demands were not gratified in twenty minutes. Although these threats were not directed particularly against congress, the government of the union was grossly insulted, and those who administered it were blockaded for several hours by licentious soldiers. After remaining in this situation about three hours, the members separated, having agreed to reassemble at Princeton.

On receiving information of this outrage, the Commander-in-chief detached fifteen hundred men under the command of Major General Howe, to suppress the mutiny. His indignation at this insult to the civil authority, and his mortification at this misconduct of any portion of the American troops, were strongly marked in his letter to the president of congress.

"While," said he, "I suffer the most poignant distress in observing that a handful of men, contemptible in numbers, and equally so in point of service, (if the veteran troops from the southward have not been seduced by their example,) and who are not worthy to be called soldiers, should disgrace themselves and their country as the Pennsylvania mutineers have done by insulting the sovereign authority of the United States, and that of their own, I feel an inexpressible satisfaction, that even this behaviour can not stain the name of the American soldiery. It can not be imputed to, or reflect dishonour on, the army at large; but, on the contrary, it will by the striking contrast it exhibits, hold up to public view the other troops in the most advantageous point of light. Upon taking all the circumstances into consideration, I can not sufficiently express my surprise and indignation at the arrogance, the folly, and the wickedness of the mutineers; nor can I sufficiently admire the fidelity, the bravery, and patriotism, which must forever signalize the unsullied character of the other corps of our army. For when we consider that these Pennsylvania levies, who have now mutinied, are recruits, and soldiers of a day, who have not borne the heat and burden of the war, and who can have in reality very few hardships to complain of; and when we at the same time recollect that those soldiers, who have lately been furloughed from this army, are the veterans who have patiently endured hunger, nakedness and cold; who have suffered and bled without a murmur, and who, with perfect good order, have retired to their homes, without a settlement of their accounts, or a farthing of money in their pockets; we shall be as much astonished at the virtues of the latter, as we are struck with horror and detestation at the proceedings of the former, and every candid mind, without indulging ill-grounded prejudices, will undoubtedly make the proper discrimination."

Before the detachment from the army could reach Philadelphia, the disturbances were, in a great degree, quieted without bloodshed; but General Howe was ordered by congress to continue his march into Pennsylvania, "in order that immediate measures might be taken to confine and bring to trial all such persons belonging to the army as have been principally active in the late mutiny; to disarm the remainder; and to examine fully into all the circumstances relating thereto."

The interval between the treaty with Great Britain and his retiring into private life, was devoted by the Commander-in-chief to objects of permanent utility.

The independence of his country being established, he looked forward with anxiety to its future destinies. These might greatly depend on the systems to be adopted on the return of peace, and to those systems much of his attention was directed. The future peace establishment of the United States, was one of the many interesting subjects which claimed the consideration of congress. As the experience of General Washington would certainly enable him to suggest many useful ideas on this important point, his opinions respecting it were requested by the committee to whom it was referred. His letter on this occasion, which was deposited, it is presumed, in the archives of state, will long deserve the attention of those to whom the interests of the United States may be confided. His strongest hopes of securing the future tranquillity, dignity and respectability of his country were placed on a well regulated and well disciplined militia, and his sentiments on this subject are entitled to the more regard, as a long course of severe experience had enabled him to mark the total incompetency of the existing system to the great purposes of national defence.

Nov. 25.

At length the British troops evacuated New York, and a detachment from the American army took possession of that town.

Guards being posted for the security of the citizens, General Washington, accompanied by Governor Clinton, and attended by many civil and military officers, and a large number of respectable inhabitants on horseback, made his public entry into the city; where he was received with every mark of respect and attention. His military course was now on the point of terminating; and he was about to bid adieu to his comrades in arms. This affecting interview took place on the 4th of December. At noon, the principal officers of the army assembled at Fraunces' tavern, soon after which, their beloved commander entered the room. His emotions were too strong to be concealed. Filling a glass he turned to them and said, "With a heart full of love and gratitude, I now take leave of you; I most devoutly wish that your latter days may be as prosperous and happy, as your former ones have been glorious and honourable." Having drunk, he added, "I can not come to each of you to take my leave, but shall be obliged if each of you will come and take me by the hand." General Knox, being nearest, turned to him. Washington, incapable of utterance, grasped his hand and embraced him. In the same affectionate manner he took leave of each succeeding officer. The tear of manly sensibility was in every eye; and not a word was articulated to interrupt the dignified silence, and the tenderness of the scene. Leaving the room, he passed through the corps of light infantry, and walked to White Hall, where a barge waited to convey him to Powles Hook. The whole company followed in mute and solemn procession, with dejected countenances, testifying feelings of delicious melancholy, which no language can describe. Having entered the barge, he turned to the company, and, waving his hat, bid them a silent adieu. They paid him the same affectionate compliment; and, after the barge had left them, returned in the same solemn manner to the place where they had assembled.[1]

Congress was then in session at Annapolis, in Maryland, to which place General Washington repaired, for the purpose of resigning into their hands the authority with which they had invested him.[2] He arrived on the 19th of December. The next day he informed that body of his intention to ask leave to resign the commission he had the honour of holding in their service; and requested to know whether it would be their pleasure that he should offer his resignation in writing, or at an audience.

To give more dignity to the act, they determined that it should be offered at a public audience on the following Tuesday, at twelve. Dec. 23.

When the hour arrived for performing a ceremony so well calculated to recall the various interesting scenes which had passed since the commission now to be returned was granted, the gallery was crowded with spectators, and several persons of distinction were admitted on the floor of congress. The members remained seated and covered. The spectators were standing and uncovered. The general was introduced by the secretary, and conducted to a chair. After a short pause, the president[3] informed him that "The United States in congress assembled were prepared to receive his communications." With native dignity improved by the solemnity of the occasion, the general rose and delivered the following address.

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[1] Gordon.

[2] See note, No. II. at end of the volume.

[3] General Mifflin.

"Mr. President,

"The great events on which my resignation depended, having at length taken place, I have now the honour of offering my sincere congratulations to congress, and of presenting myself before them, to surrender into their hands the trust committed to me, and to claim the indulgence of retiring from the service of my country.

"Happy in the confirmation of our independence and sovereignty, and pleased with the opportunity afforded the United States of becoming a respectable nation, I resign with satisfaction the appointment I accepted with diffidence; a diffidence in my abilities to accomplish so arduous a task, which, however was superseded by a confidence in the rectitude of our cause, the support of the supreme power of the union, and the patronage of heaven.

"The successful termination of the war has verified the most sanguine expectations; and my gratitude for the interposition of Providence, and the assistance I have received from my countrymen, increases with every review of the momentous contest.

"While I repeat my obligations to the army in general, I should do injustice to my own feelings not to acknowledge in this place, the peculiar services and distinguished merits of the gentlemen who have been attached to my person during the war. It was impossible the choice of confidential officers to compose my family should have been more fortunate. Permit me, sir, to recommend in particular, those who have continued in the service to the present moment, as worthy of the favourable notice and patronage of congress.

"I consider it as an indispensable duty to close this last act of my official life, by commending the interests of our dearest country to the protection of Almighty God, and those who have the superintendence of them to his holy keeping.

"Having now finished the work assigned me, I retire from the great theatre of action, and bidding an affectionate farewell to this august body, under whose orders I have so long acted, I here offer my commission, and take my leave of all the employments of public life."

After advancing to the chair and delivering his commission to the president, he returned to his place, and received standing the following answer of congress, which was delivered by the president.

"Sir,

"The United States in congress assembled, receive with emotions too affecting for utterance, the solemn resignation of the authorities under which you have led their troops with success through a perilous and doubtful war. Called upon by your country to defend its invaded rights, you accepted the sacred charge, before it had formed alliances, and whilst it was without funds or a government to support you. You have conducted the great military contest with wisdom and fortitude, invariably regarding the rights of the civil power, through all disasters and changes. You have by the love and confidence of your fellow citizens, enabled them to display their martial genius, and transmit their fame to posterity. You have persevered until these United States, aided by a magnanimous king and nation, have been enabled under a just Providence, to close the war in freedom, safety, and independence; on which happy event we sincerely join you in congratulations.

"Having defended the standard of liberty in this new world, having taught a lesson useful to those who inflict and to those who feel oppression, you retire from the great theatre of action with the blessings of your fellow citizens. But the glory of your virtues will not terminate with your military command; it will continue to animate remotest ages.

"We feel with you our obligations to the army in general, and will particularly charge ourselves with the interests of those confidential officers who have attended your person to this affecting moment.

"We join you in commending the interests of our dearest country to the protection of Almighty God, beseeching him to dispose the hearts and minds of its citizens, to improve the opportunity afforded them of becoming a happy and respectable nation. And for you, we address to him our earnest prayers that a life so beloved, may be fostered with all his care; that your days may be as happy as they have been illustrious; and that he will finally give you that reward which this world can not give."

This scene being closed, a scene rendered peculiarly interesting by the personages who appeared in it, by the great events it recalled to the memory, and by the singularity of the circumstances under which it was displayed, the American chief withdrew from the hall of congress, leaving the silent and admiring spectators deeply impressed with those sentiments which its solemnity and dignity were calculated to inspire.

Divested of his military character, General Washington retired to Mount Vernon, followed by the enthusiastic love, esteem and admiration of his countrymen. Relieved from the agitations of a doubtful contest, and from the toils of an exalted station, he returned with increased delight to the duties and the enjoyments of a private citizen. He indulged the hope that, in the shade of retirement, under the protection of a free government, and the benignant influence of mild and equal laws, he might taste that felicity which is the reward of a mind at peace with itself, and conscious of its own purity.

CHAPTER III

1783 to 1787.

WHEN an individual, long in possession of great power, and almost unlimited influence, retires from office with alacrity, and resumes the character of a private citizen with pleasure, the mind is gratified in contemplating the example of virtuous moderation, and dwells upon it with approving satisfaction. We look at man in his most estimable character; and this view of him exalts our opinion of human nature. Such was the example exhibited by General Washington to his country and to the world. His deportment, and his language, equally attest that he returned with these feelings to the employments of private life. In a letter to Governor Clinton, written only three days after his arrival at Mount Vernon, he says, "The scene is at length closed. I feel myself eased of a load of public care, and hope to spend the remainder of my days in cultivating the affections of good men, and in the practice of the domestic virtues." "At length my dear marquis," said he to his noble and highly valued friend, Lafayette, "I have become a private citizen on the banks of the Potomac; and under the shadow of my own vine, and my own fig tree, free from the bustle of a camp, and the busy scenes of public life, I am solacing myself with those tranquil enjoyments, of which the soldier who is ever in pursuit of fame—the statesman whose watchful days and sleepless nights are spent in devising schemes to promote the welfare of his own—perhaps the ruin of other countries, as if this globe was insufficient for us all—and the courtier who is always watching the countenance of his prince in the hope of catching a gracious smile—can have very little conception. I have not only retired from all public employments, but am retiring within myself, and shall be able to view the solitary walk, and tread the paths of private life, with heartfelt satisfaction. Envious of none, I am determined to be pleased with all; and this, my dear friend, being the order of my march, I will move gently down the stream of life, until I sleep with my fathers."

But a mind accustomed to labour for a nation's welfare, does not immediately divest itself of ancient habits. That custom of thinking on public affairs, and that solicitude respecting them, which belong to the patriot in office, follow him into his retreat. In a letter to General Knox, written soon after his resignation, General Washington thus expressed the feelings attendant upon this sudden transition from public to private pursuits. "I am just beginning to experience the ease and freedom from public cares, which, however desirable, takes some time to realize; for strange as it may seem, it is nevertheless true, that it was not until lately, I could get the better of my usual custom of ruminating, as soon as I awoke in the morning, on the business of the ensuing day; and of my surprise at finding, after revolving many things in my mind, that I was no longer a public man, or had any thing to do with public transactions. I feel now, however, as I conceive a wearied traveller must do, who, after treading many a painful step with a heavy burden on his shoulders, is eased of the latter, having reached the haven to which all the former were directed; and from his house-top is looking back, and tracing with an eager eye, the meanders by which he escaped the quick-sands and mires which lay in his way, and into which none but the all powerful Guide and Dispenser of human events could have prevented his falling."

For several months after arriving at Mount Vernon, almost every day brought him the addresses of an affectionate and grateful people. The glow of expression in which the high sense universally entertained of his services was conveyed, manifested the warmth of feeling which animated the American bosom. This unexampled tribute of voluntary applause, paid by a whole people, to an individual no longer in power, made no impression on the unassuming modesty of his character and deportment. The same firmness of mind, the same steady and well tempered judgment, which had guided him through the most perilous seasons of the war, still regulated his conduct; and the enthusiastic applause of an admiring nation served only to cherish sentiments of gratitude, and to give greater activity to the desire still further to contribute to the general prosperity.

It was not by addresses alone that his country manifested its attachment to him. Soon after peace was proclaimed, congress unanimously passed a resolution for the erection of an equestrian statue of their general,[1] at the place which should be established for the residence of the government.

The legislature of Virginia too, at its first session after his resignation, passed the following resolution.[2]

"Resolved, that the executive be requested to take measures for procuring a statue of General Washington, to be of the finest marble and best workmanship, with the following inscription on its pedestal:

"The general assembly of the commonwealth of Virginia have caused this statue to be erected as a monument of affection and gratitude to GEORGE WASHINGTON, who, uniting to the endowments of the HERO, the virtues of the PATRIOT, and exerting both in establishing the liberties of his country, has rendered his name dear to his fellow citizens, and given the world an immortal example of true glory."

Although the toils of General Washington were no longer exhibited to the public eye, his time continued to be usefully employed. The judicious cultivation of the earth is justly placed among the most valuable sources of national prosperity, and nothing could be more wretched than the general state of agriculture in America. To its melioration by examples which might be followed, and by the introduction of systems adapted to the soil, the climate, and to the situation of the people, the energies of his active and intelligent mind were now in a great degree directed. No improvement of the implements to be used on a farm, no valuable experiments in husbandry, escaped his attention. His inquiries, which were equally minute and comprehensive, extended beyond the limits of his own country; and he entered into a correspondence on this interesting subject with those foreigners who had been most distinguished for their additions to the stock of agricultural science.

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[1] "Resolved that the statue be of bronze: the general to be represented in a Roman dress, holding a truncheon in his right hand, and his head encircled with a laurel wreath. The statue to be supported by a marble pedestal on which are to be represented, in basso relievo, the following principal events of the war, in which General Washington commanded in person: the evacuation of Boston:—the capture of the Hessians at Trenton:—the battle of Princeton:—the action of Monmouth:—and the surrender of York.—On the upper part of the front of the pedestal to be engraved as follows: The United States in congress assembled, ordered this statue to be erected in the year of our Lord 1783, in honour of George Washington, the illustrious Commander-in-chief of the armies of the United States of America, during the war which vindicated and secured their liberty, sovereignty and independence.

[2] This resolution has been carried into execution. The statue it ordained now stands in the capitol of Virginia, in a spacious area in the centre of the building. A bust of the Marquis de Lafayette, which was also directed by the legislature, is placed in a niche of the wall in the same part of the building.

Mingled with this favourite pursuit, were the multiplied avocations resulting from the high office he had lately filled. He was engaged in an extensive correspondence with the friends most dear to his heart—the foreign and American officers who had served under him during the late war—and with almost every conspicuous political personage of his own, and with many of other countries. Literary men also were desirous of obtaining his approbation of their works, and his attention was solicited to every production of American genius. His countrymen who were about to travel, were anxious to receive from the first citizen of this rising republic, some testimonial of their worth; and all those strangers of distinction who visited this newly created empire, were ambitious of being presented to its founder. Among those who were drawn across the Atlantic by curiosity, and perhaps by a desire to observe the progress of the popular governments which were instituted in this new world, was Mrs. Macauley Graham. By the principles contained in her History of the Stuarts, this lady had acquired much reputation in republican America, and by all was received with marked attention. For the sole purpose of paying her respects to a person whose fame had spread over Europe, she paid a visit to Mount Vernon; and, if her letters may be credited, the exalted opinion she had formed of its proprietor, was "not diminished by a personal acquaintance with him."

To these occupations, which were calculated to gratify an intelligent mind, or which derived a value from the indulgence they afforded to the feelings of the heart, others were unavoidably added, in the composition of which, no palatable ingredient was intermixed. Of these unwelcome intrusions upon his time, General Washington thus complained to an intimate military friend. "It is not, my dear sir, the letters of my friends which give me trouble, or add aught to my perplexity. I receive them with pleasure, and pay as much attention to them as my avocations will permit. It is references to old matters with which I have nothing to do—applications which oftentimes can not be complied with—inquiries, to satisfy which would employ the pen of a historian—letters of compliment, as unmeaning perhaps as they are troublesome, but which must be attended to; and the common-place business—which employ my pen and my time often disagreeably. Indeed, these, with company, deprive me of exercise; and, unless I can obtain relief, must be productive of disagreeable consequences. Already I begin to feel their effects. Heavy and painful oppressions of the head, and other disagreeable sensations often trouble me. I am determined therefore to employ some person who shall ease me of the *drudgery* of this business. At any rate, if the whole of it is thereby suspended, I am determined to use exercise. My private affairs also require infinitely more attention than I have given, or can give them, under present circumstances. They can no longer be neglected without involving my ruin."

It was some time after the date of this letter before he could introduce into his family a young gentleman, whose education and manners enabled him to fill the station of a private secretary and of a friend.

This multiplicity of private avocations could not entirely withdraw the mind of Washington from objects tending to promote and secure the public happiness. His resolution never again to appear in the busy scenes of political life, though believed by himself, and by his bosom friends, to be unalterable, could not render him indifferent to those measures on which the prosperity of his country essentially depended.

To a person looking beyond the present moment, it was only necessary to glance over the map of the United States, to be impressed with the importance of connecting the western with the eastern territory, by facilitating the means of intercourse between them. To this subject, the attention of General Washington had been directed in the early part of his life. While the American states were yet British colonies, he had obtained the passage of a bill for opening the Potomac so as to render it navigable from tide water to Wills creek.[1] The river James had also been comprehended in this plan; and he had triumphed so far over the opposition produced by local interests and prejudices, that the business was in a train which promised success, when the revolutionary war diverted the attention of its patrons, and of all America, from internal improvements to the still greater objects of liberty and independence. As that war approached its termination, subjects which for a time had yielded their pretensions to consideration, reclaimed that place to which their real magnitude entitled them; and internal navigation again attracted the attention of the wise and thinking part of society. Accustomed to contemplate America as his country, and to consider with solicitude the interests of the whole, Washington now took a more enlarged view of the advantages to be derived from opening both the eastern and the western waters, and for this, as well as for other purposes, after peace had been proclaimed, he traversed the western parts of New England and New York. "I have lately," said he in a letter to the Marquis of Chastellux, a nobleman in pursuit of literary as well as of military fame, "made a tour through the lakes George and Champlain as far as Crown Point;—then returning to Schenectady, I proceeded up the Mohawk river to fort Schuyler, crossed over to Wood creek which empties into the Oneida lake, and affords the water communication with Ontario. I then traversed the country to the head of the eastern branch of the Susquehanna, and viewed the lake Otswego, and the portage between that lake and the Mohawk river at Conajohario. Prompted by these actual observations, I could not help taking a more contemplative and extensive view of the vast inland navigation of these United States, and could not but be struck with the immense diffusion and importance of it; and with the goodness of that Providence which has dealt his favours to us with so profuse a hand. Would to God we may have wisdom enough to improve them. I shall not rest contented until I have explored the western country, and traversed those lines (or great part of them) which have given bounds to a new empire."

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[1] About one hundred and fifty miles.

Scarcely had he answered those spontaneous offerings of the heart, which flowed in upon him from every part of a grateful nation, when his views were once more seriously turned to this truly interesting subject. Its magnitude was also impressed on others; and the value of obtaining the aid which his influence and active interference would afford to any exertions for giving this direction to the public mind, and for securing the happy execution of the plan which might be devised, was perceived by all those who attached to the great work its real importance. A gentleman[1] who had taken an expanded view of it, concluded a letter to General Washington, containing a detailed statement of his ideas on the subject in these terms:

"But a most powerful objection always arises to propositions of this kind. It is, that public undertakings are carelessly managed, and much money spent to little purpose. To obviate this objection is the purpose of my giving you the trouble of this discussion. You have retired from public life. You have weighed this determination, and it would be impertinence in me to touch it. But would the superintendence of this work break in too much on the sweets of retirement and repose? If they would, I stop here. Your future time and wishes are sacred in my eye. If it would be only a dignified amusement to you, what a monument of your retirement would it be! It is one which would follow that of your public life, and bespeak it the work of the same great hand. I am confident, that would you either alone, or jointly with any persons you think proper, be willing to direct this business, it would remove the only objection, the weight of which I apprehend."

In the autumn of 1784, General Washington made a tour as far west as Pittsburgh; after returning from which, his first moments of leisure were devoted to the task of engaging his countrymen in a work which appeared to him to merit still more attention from its political, than from its commercial influence on the union. In a long and interesting letter to Mr. Harrison, then governor of Virginia, he detailed the advantages which might be derived from opening the great rivers, the Potomac and the James, as high as should be practicable. After stating with his accustomed exactness the distances, and the difficulties to be surmounted in bringing the trade of the west to different points on the Atlantic, he expressed unequivocally the opinion that the rivers of Virginia afforded a more convenient, and a more direct course than could be found elsewhere, for that rich and increasing commerce. This was strongly urged as a motive for immediately commencing the work. But the rivers of the Atlantic constituted only a part of the great plan he contemplated. He suggested the appointment of commissioners of integrity and abilities, exempt from the suspicion of prejudice, whose duty it should be, after an accurate examination of the James and the Potomac, to search out the nearest and best portages between those waters and the streams capable of improvement, which run into the Ohio. Those streams were to be accurately surveyed, the impediments to their navigation ascertained, and their relative advantages examined. The navigable waters west of the Ohio, towards the great lakes, were also to be traced to their sources, and those which empty into the lakes to be followed to their mouths. "These things being done, and an accurate map of the whole presented to the public, he was persuaded that reason would dictate what was right and proper." for the execution of this latter part of his plan he had also much reliance on congress; and in addition to the general advantages to be drawn from the measure, he laboured, in his letters to the members of that body, to establish the opinion, that the surveys he recommended would add to the revenue, by enhancing the value of the lands offered for sale. "Nature," he said, "had made such an ample display of her bounties in those regions, that the more the country was explored, the more it would rise in estimation."

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[1] Mr. Jefferson.

The assent and co-operation of Maryland being indispensable to the improvement of the Potomac, he was equally earnest in his endeavours to impress a conviction of its superior advantages on those individuals who possessed most influence in that state. In doing so, he detailed the measures which would unquestionably be adopted by New York and Pennsylvania, for acquiring the monopoly of the western commerce, and the difficulty which would be found in diverting it from the channel it had once taken. "I am not," he added, "for discouraging the exertions of any state to draw the commerce of the western country to its sea-ports. The more communications we open to it, the closer we bind that rising world (for indeed it may be so called) to our interests, and the greater strength shall we acquire by it. Those to whom nature affords the best communication, will, if they are wise, enjoy the greatest share of the trade. All I would be understood to mean, therefore, is, that the gifts of Providence may not be neglected."

But the light in which this subject would be viewed with most interest, and which gave to it most importance, was its political influence on the union. "I need not remark to you, sir," said he in his letter to the governor of Virginia, "that the flanks and rear of the United States are possessed by other powers,—and formidable ones too: nor need I press the necessity of applying the cement of interest to bind all parts of the union together by indissoluble bonds,—especially of binding that part of it which lies immediately west of us, to the middle states. For what ties, let me ask, should we have upon those people, how entirely unconnected with them shall we be, and what troubles may we not apprehend, if the Spaniards on their right, and Great Britain on their left, instead of throwing impediments in their way as they now do, should hold out lures for their trade and alliance? when they get strength, which will be sooner than most people conceive, what will be the consequence of their having formed close commercial connexions with both, or either of those powers? it need not, in my opinion, the gift of prophecy to foretell."

This idea was enlarged and pressed with much earnestness, in his letters to several members of congress.

The letter to the governor was communicated to the assembly of Virginia, and the internal improvements it recommended were zealously supported by the wisest members of that body. While the subject remained undecided, General Washington, accompanied by the Marquis de Lafayette, who had crossed the Atlantic, and had devoted a part of his time to the delights of an enthusiastic friendship, paid a visit to the capital of the state. Never was reception more cordial, or more demonstrative of respect and affection, than was given to these beloved personages. But amidst the display of addresses and of entertainments which were produced by the occasion, the great business of internal improvements was not forgotten; and the ardour of the moment was seized to conquer those objections to the plan, which yet lingered in the bosoms of members who could perceive in it no future advantages to compensate for the present expense.

An exact conformity between the acts of Virginia and of Maryland, being indispensable to the improvement of the Potomac, the friends of the measure deemed it adviseable to avail themselves of the same influence with the latter state, which had been successfully employed with the former; and a resolution was passed, soon after the return of General Washington to Mount Vernon, requesting him[1] to attend the legislature of Maryland, in order to agree on a bill which might receive the sanction of both states. This agreement being happily completed the bills were enacted which form the first essay towards connecting the navigation of the eastern with the western waters of the United States.

These acts were succeeded by one, which conveys the liberal wishes of the legislature, with a delicacy scarcely less honourable to its framers, than to him who was its object. The treasurer had been instructed to subscribe, in behalf of the state, for a specified number of shares in each company. Just at the close of the session, when no refusal of their offer could be communicated to them, a bill was suddenly brought in, which received the unanimous assent of both houses, authorizing the treasurer to subscribe for the benefit of General Washington, the same number of shares in each company as were to be taken for the state. A preamble was prefixed to the enacting clause of this bill[2] in which its greatest value consisted. With simple elegance, it conveyed the sentiment, that in seizing this occasion, to make a donation which would in some degree testify their sense of the merits of their most favoured and most illustrious citizen, the donors would themselves be the obliged.

However delightful might be the sensations produced by this delicate and flattering testimony of the affection of his fellow citizens, it was not without its embarrassments. From his early resolution to receive no pecuniary compensation for his services, he could not permit himself to depart; and yet this mark of the gratitude and attachment of his country, could not easily be rejected without furnishing occasion for sentiments he was unwilling to excite. To the friend[1] who conveyed to him the first intelligence of this bill, his difficulties were thus expressed.

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[1] General Gates was associated with him in the mission.

[2] It is in these words: "whereas it is the desire of the representatives of this commonwealth to embrace every suitable occasion of testifying their sense of the unexampled merits of George Washington, esquire, towards his country, and it is their wish in particular that those great works for its improvement, which both as springing from the liberty which he has been so instrumental in establishing, and as encouraged by his patronage, will be durable monuments of his glory, may be made monuments also of the gratitude of his country. Be it enacted, &c." This bill is understood to have been drawn by Mr. Madison.

"It is not easy for me to decide by which my mind was most affected upon the receipt of your letter of the sixth instant—surprise or gratitude. Both were greater than I had words to express. The attention and good wishes which the assembly has evidenced by their act for vesting in me one hundred and fifty shares in the navigation of the rivers Potomac and James, is more than mere compliment,—there is an unequivocal and substantial meaning annexed. But, believe me, sir, no circumstance has happened since I left the walks of public life which has so much embarrassed me. On the one hand, I consider this act, as I have already observed, as a noble and unequivocal proof of the good opinion, the affection, and disposition of my country to serve me; and I should be hurt, if by declining the acceptance of it, my refusal should be construed into disrespect, or the smallest slight upon the generous intention of the legislature; or that an ostentatious display of disinterestedness, or public virtue, was the source of refusal.

"On the other hand, it is really my wish to have my mind and my actions, which are the result of reflection, as free and independent as the air, that I may be more at liberty (in things which my opportunities and experience have brought me to the knowledge of) to express my sentiments, and if necessary, to suggest what may occur to me, under the fullest conviction that, although my judgment may be arraigned, there will be no suspicion that sinister motives had the smallest influence in the suggestion. Not content then with the bare consciousness of my having in all this navigation business, acted upon the clearest conviction of the political importance of the measure, I would wish that every individual who may hear that it was a favourite plan of mine, may know also, that I had no other motive for promoting it, than the advantage of which I conceived it would be productive to the union at large, and to this state in particular, by cementing the eastern and western territory together, at the same time that it will give vigour and increase to our commerce, and be a convenience to our citizens."

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[1] Mr. Madison.

At length he determined, in the same letter which should convey his resolution not to retain the shares for his private emolument, to signify his willingness to hold them in trust for such public institution as the legislature should approve. The following letter conveyed this resolution to the general assembly, through the governor of the state.

(October, 1785.)

"Sir,

"Your excellency having been pleased to transmit me a copy of the act appropriating to my benefit certain shares in the companies for opening the navigation of James and Potomac rivers, I take the liberty of returning to the general assembly through your hands, the profound and grateful acknowledgments inspired by so signal a mark of their beneficent intentions towards me. I beg you, sir, to assure them, that I am filled on this occasion with every sentiment which can flow from a heart warm with love for my country, sensible to every token of its approbation and affection, and solicitous to testify in every instance a respectful submission to its wishes.

"With these sentiments in my bosom, I need not dwell on the anxiety I feel in being obliged, in this instance, to decline a favour which is rendered no less flattering by the manner in which it is conveyed, than it is affectionate in itself. In explaining this, I pass over a comparison of my endeavours in the public service, with the many honourable testimonies of approbation which have already so far overrated, and overpaid them —reciting one consideration only which supersedes the necessity of recurring to every other.

"When I was first called to the station with which I was honoured during the late conflict for our liberties, to the diffidence which I had so many reasons to feel in accepting it, I thought it my duty to join a firm resolution to shut my hand against every pecuniary recompense. To this resolution I have invariably adhered, and from it (if I had the inclination) I do not consider myself at liberty now to depart.

"Whilst I repeat therefore my fervent acknowledgments to the legislature for their very kind sentiments and intentions in my favour, and at the same time beg them to be persuaded that a remembrance of this singular proof of their goodness towards me, will never cease to cherish returns of the warmest affection and gratitude, I must pray that their act, so far as it has for its object my personal emolument, may not have its effect; but if it should please the general assembly to permit me to turn the destination of the fund vested in me, from my private emolument, to objects of a public nature, it will be my study, in selecting these, to prove the sincerity of my gratitude for the honour conferred upon me, by preferring such as may appear most subservient to the enlightened and patriotic views of the legislature."

The wish suggested in this letter, immediately received the sanction of the legislature; and at a subsequent time, the trust executed by conveying the shares respectively to the use of a seminary of learning established in the vicinity of each river.

General Washington felt too strong an interest in the success of these works, to refuse the presidency of the companies instituted for their completion. In conducting the affairs of the Potomac company, he took an active part: to that formed for opening the navigation of the James, he could only give his counsel.

These were not the only institutions which occasionally drew the farmer of Mount Vernon from his retreat, and continued him in the public view.

The sentiments with which the officers of the American army contemplated a final separation from each other, will be comprehended by all who are conversant with the finest feelings of the human heart. Companions in virtuous suffering, in danger, and in glory—attached to each other by common exertions made in a severe struggle for the attainment of a common object—they felt that to part for ever was a calamity too afflicting to be supported. The means of perpetuating those friendships which had been formed, and of renewing that endearing social intercourse which had taken place in camp, were universally desired. Perhaps, too, that *esprit de corps* which, identifying the individual with the community, transfers to the aggregate of the society's portion of that self-love which is felt by every private person, and which inspires the members with a repugnance to the dissolution of the political, not unlike in effect, to that which is excited at the dissolution of the natural body, was not without its influence in suggesting some expedient which might preserve the memory of the army, while it cheered the officers who were on the point of separating, with the hope that the separation would not be eternal: that at distant intervals, they might still communicate with each other: that the bonds by which they were connected would not be totally dissolved: and that, for many beneficial purposes, the patriots of the American army would still form one great society.

This idea was suggested by General Knox, and was matured in a meeting composed of the generals, and of deputies from the regiments, at which Major General the Baron Steuben presided. An agreement was then entered into, by which the officers were to constitute themselves into one society of friends, to endure as long as they should endure, or any of their eldest male posterity; and, in failure thereof, any collateral branches who might be judged worthy of becoming its supporters and members, were to be admitted into it. To mark their veneration for that celebrated Roman between whose situation and their own they found some similitude, they were to be denominated, "The Society of the Cincinnati." Individuals of the respective states, distinguished for their patriotism and abilities, might be admitted as honorary members for life, provided their numbers should at no time exceed a ratio of one to four.

The society was to be designated by a medal of gold representing the American eagle bearing on its breast the devices of order, which was to be suspended by a ribbon of deep blue edged with white, descriptive of the union of America and France. To the ministers who had represented his most Christian majesty at Philadelphia, to the admirals who had commanded in the American seas, to the Count de Rochambeau, and the generals and colonels of the French troops who had served in the United States, the insignia of the order were to be presented, and they were to be invited to consider themselves as members of the society; at the head of which the Commander-in-chief was respectfully solicited to place his name. An incessant attention, on the part of the members to the preservation of the exalted rights and liberties of human nature for which they had fought and bled, and an unalterable determination to promote and cherish between the respective states, union and national honour, were declared to be the immutable principles of the society. Its objects were, to perpetuate the remembrance of the American revolution, as well as cordial affection and the spirit of brotherly kindness among the officers; and to extend acts of beneficence to those officers and their families whose situation might require assistance. To give effect to the charitable object of the institution, a common fund was to be created by the deposit of one month's pay on the part of every officer becoming a member; the product of which fund, after defraying certain necessary charges, was to be sacredly appropriated to this humane purpose.

The military gentlemen of each state were to constitute a distinct society, deputies from which were to assemble triennially, in order to form a general meeting for the regulation of general concerns.

Without encountering any open opposition, this institution was carried into complete effect; and its honours were sought, especially by the foreign officers, with great avidity. But soon after it was organized, those jealousies which in its first moments had been concealed, burst forth into open view. In October, 1783, a pamphlet was published by Mr. Burk of South Carolina, for the purpose of rousing the apprehensions of the public, and of directing its resentments against the society. Perceiving or believing that he perceived, in the Cincinnati, the foundation of an hereditary order, whose base, from associating with the military the chiefs of the powerful families in each state, would acquire a degree of solidity and strength admitting of any superstructure, he portrayed, in the fervid and infectious language of passion, the dangers to result from the fabric which would be erected on it. The ministers of the United States too in Europe, and the political theorists who cast their eyes towards the west for support to favourite systems, having the privileged orders constantly in view, were loud in their condemnations of an institution from which a race of nobles was expected to spring. The alarm was spread throughout every state, and a high degree of jealousy pervaded the mass of the people. In Massachusetts, the subject was even taken up by the legislature; and it was well understood that, in congress, the society was viewed with secret disapprobation.

It was impossible for General Washington to view with indifference this state of the public feeling. Bound to the officers of his army by the strictest ties of esteem and affection, conscious of their merits, and assured of their attachment to his person, he was alive to every thing which might affect their reputation, or their interests. However innocent the institution might be in itself, or however laudable its real objects, if the impression it made on the public mind was such as to draw a line of distinction between the military men of America and their fellow citizens, he was earnest in his wishes to adopt such measures as would efface that impression. However ill founded the public prejudices might be, he thought this a case in which they ought to be respected; and, if it should be found impracticable to convince the people that their fears were misplaced, he was disposed "to yield to them in a degree, and not to suffer that which was intended for the best of purposes, to produce a bad one."

A general meeting was to be held in Philadelphia in May 1784; and, in the mean time, he had been appointed the temporary president.

To prepare the officers for those fundamental changes in the principles of the society, which he contemplated as a necessary sacrifice to the public apprehensions, his ideas were suggested to his military correspondents; and to give weight to the measures which might be recommended, his utmost influence was exerted to obtain a full assemblage of deputies, which should be respectable for its numbers, and for its wisdom.

Officers of high respectability entertained different opinions on surrendering those parts of the institution which were deemed objectionable. By some, the public clamour was attributed to a spirit of persecution, which only attached them more closely to the order. Many, it was said, were in quest of a cause of quarrel with their late protectors; and the removal of one ground of accusation against them, would only induce the substitution of some other. The source of the uneasiness which had been manifested was to be found in the temper of the people, not in the matters of which they complained; and if the present cause of irritation was removed, their ill humour would be openly and avowedly directed against the commutation.

General Washington was too much in the habit of considering subjects of difficulty in various points of view, and of deciding on them with coolness and deliberation, to permit his affections to influence his judgment. The most exact inquiries, assiduously made into the true state of the public mind, resulted in a conviction that opinions unfriendly to the institution, in its actual form, were extensively entertained; and that those opinions were founded, not in hostility to the late army, but in real apprehensions for equal liberty.

A wise and necessary policy required, he thought, the removal of these apprehensions; and, at the general meeting in May, the hereditary principle, and the power of adopting honorary members, were relinquished. The result demonstrated the propriety of this alteration. Although a few who always perceive most danger where none exists, and the visionaries then abounding in Europe, continued their prophetic denunciations against the order, America dismissed her fears; and, notwithstanding the refusal of one or two of the state societies to adopt the measures recommended by the general meeting, the members of the Cincinnati were received as brethren into the bosom of their country.

While General Washington thus devoted a great part of his time to rural pursuits, to the duties of friendship, and to institutions of public utility, the political state of his country, becoming daily more embarrassed, attracted more and more deeply the anxious solicitude of every enlightened and virtuous patriot. From peace, from independence, and from governments of their own choice, the United States had confidently anticipated every blessing. The glorious termination of their contest with one of the most powerful nations of the earth; the steady and persevering courage with which that contest had been maintained; and the unyielding firmness with which the privations attending it had been supported, had surrounded the infant republics with a great degree of splendour, and had bestowed upon them a character which could be preserved only by a national and dignified system of conduct. A very short time was sufficient to demonstrate that something not yet possessed was requisite, to insure the public and private prosperity expected to flow from self government. After a short struggle so to administer the existing system, as to make it competent to the great objects for which it was instituted, the effort became apparently desperate; and American affairs were impelled rapidly to a crisis, on which the continuance of the United States, as a nation appeared to depend.

In tracing the causes which led to this interesting state of things, it will be necessary to carry back our attention to the conclusion of the war.

A government authorized to declare war, but relying on independent states for the means of prosecuting it; capable of contracting debts, and of pledging the public faith for their payment, but depending on thirteen distinct sovereignties for the preservation of that faith, could not be rescued from ignominy and contempt, but by finding those sovereignties administered by men exempt from the passions incident to human nature.

The debts of the union were computed, on the first of January, 1783, at somewhat more than forty millions of dollars. "If," says congress, in an address to the states, urging that the means of payment should be placed in their hands, "other motives than that of justice could be requisite on this occasion, no nation could ever feel stronger; for to whom are the debts to be paid?

"*To an ally,* in the first place, who to the exertion of his arms in support of our cause has added the succours of his treasure; who to his important loans has added liberal donations, and whose loans themselves carry the impression of his magnanimity and friendship.

"To *individuals in a foreign country,* in the next place, who were the first to give so precious a token of their confidence in our justice, and of their friendship for our cause, and who are members of a republic which was second in espousing our rank among nations.

"Another class of creditors is, that *illustrious and patriotic band of fellow citizens,* whose blood and whose bravery have defended the liberties of their country, who have patiently borne, among other distresses, the privation of their stipends, whilst the distresses of their country disabled it from bestowing them; and who, even now, ask for no more than such a portion of their dues, as will enable them to retire from the field of victory and glory, into the bosom of peace and private citizenship, and for such effectual security for the residue of their claims, as their country is now unquestionably able to provide.

"The remaining class of creditors is composed partly of such of our fellow citizens as originally lent to the public the use of their funds, or have since manifested most confidence in their country, by receiving transfers from the lenders; and partly of those whose property has been either advanced or assumed for the public service. To discriminate the merits of these several descriptions of creditors, would be a task equally unnecessary and invidious. If the voice of humanity plead more loudly in favour of some than of others, the voice of policy, no less than of justice, pleads in favour of all. A wise nation will never permit those who relieve the wants of their country, or who rely most on its faith, its firmness, and its resources, when either of them is distrusted, to suffer by the event."

In a government constituted like that of the United States, it would readily be expected that great contrariety of sentiment would prevail, respecting the principles on which its affairs should be conducted. It has been already stated that the continent was divided into two great political parties, the one of which contemplated America as a nation, and laboured incessantly to invest the federal head with powers competent to the preservation of the union. The other attached itself to the state government, viewed all the powers of congress with jealousy, and assented reluctantly to measures which would enable the head to act, in any respect, independently of the members. Men of enlarged and liberal minds who, in the imbecility of a general government, by which alone the capacities of the nation could be efficaciously exerted, could discern the imbecility of the nation itself; who, viewing the situation of the world, could perceive the dangers to which these young republics were exposed, if not held together by a cement capable of preserving a beneficial connexion; who felt the full value of national honour, and the full obligation of national faith; and who were persuaded of the insecurity of both, if resting for their preservation on the concurrence of thirteen distinct sovereigns; arranged themselves generally in the first party. The officers of the army, whose local prejudices had been wakened by associating with each other, and whose experience had furnished lessons on the inefficacy of requisitions which were not soon to be forgotten, threw their weight almost universally into the same scale.

The other party, if not more intelligent, was more numerous, and more powerful. It was sustained by prejudices and feelings which grew without effort, and gained strength from the intimate connexions subsisting between a state and its citizens. It required a concurrence of extrinsic circumstances to force on minds unwilling to receive the demonstration, a conviction of the necessity of an effective national government, and to give even a temporary ascendency to that party which had long foreseen and deplored the crisis to which the affairs of the United States were hastening.

Sensible that the character of the government would be decided, in a considerable degree, by the measures which should immediately follow the treaty of peace, gentlemen of the first political abilities and integrity sought a place in the congress of 1783. Combining their efforts for the establishment of principles on which the honour and the interest of the nation were believed to depend, they exerted all their talents to impress on the several states, the necessity of conferring on the government of the union, powers which might be competent to its preservation, and which would enable it to comply with the engagements it had formed. With unwearied perseverance they digested and obtained the assent of congress to a system, which, though unequal to what their wishes would have prepared, or their judgments have approved, was believed to be the best that was attainable. The great object in view was, "to restore and support public credit," to effect which it was necessary, "to obtain from the states substantial funds for funding the whole debt of the United States."

The committee[1] to whom this interesting subject was referred, reported sundry resolutions, recommending it to the several states, to vest in congress permanent and productive funds adequate to the immediate payment of the interest on the national debt, and to the gradual extinction of the principal. A change in the rule by which the proportions of the different states were to be ascertained, was also recommended. In lieu of that article of the confederation which apportions on them the sums required for the public treasury, according to the value of their located lands with the improvements thereon, it was proposed to substitute another more capable of execution, which should make the population of each state the measure of its contribution.[2]

To the application which congress had made during the war for power to levy an impost of five per cent on imported and prize goods, one state had never assented, and another had withdrawn the assent it had previously given.

It was impossible to yield to some of the objections which had been made to this measure, because they went to the certain destruction of the system itself; but in points where the alterations demanded, though mischievous, were not fatal to the plan, it was thought adviseable to accommodate the recommendations of the government to the prejudices which had been disclosed. It had been insisted that the power of appointing persons to collect the duties, would enable congress to introduce into a state, officers unknown and unaccountable to the government thereof; and that a power to collect an indefinite sum for an indefinite time, for the expenditure of which that body could not be accountable to the states, would render it independent of its constitutents, and would be dangerous to liberty, to obviate these objections, the proposition now made was so modified, that the grant was to be limited to twenty-five years; was to be strictly appropriated to the debt contracted on account of the war; and was to be collected by persons to be appointed by the respective states.

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[1] Mr. Fitzsimmons and Mr. Rutledge.

[2] On a subsequent occasion, an attempt was made to obtain a resolution of congress, recommending as an additional amendment to the eighth article of the confederation, that the taxes for the use of the continent should be laid and levied separate from any other tax, and should be paid directly into the national treasury; and that the collectors respectively should be liable to an execution to be issued by the treasurer, or his deputy, under the direction of congress, for any arrears of taxes by him to be collected, which should not be paid into the treasury in conformity with the requisitions of congress.

Such was the prevalence of state policy, even in the government of the union, or such the conviction of the inutility of recommending such an amendment, that a vote of congress could not be obtained for asking this salutary regulation as a security for the revenue only for eight years.

After a debate, which the tedious mode of conducting business protracted for several weeks, the report was adopted; and a committee, consisting of Mr. Madison, Mr. Hamilton, and Mr. Ellsworth, was appointed to prepare an address, which should accompany the recommendation to the several states.

After a full explanation of the principles on which the system had been framed, this address proceeds:—"The plan thus communicated and explained by congress, must now receive its fate from their constituents. All the objects comprised in it are conceived to be of great importance to the happiness of this confederated republic, are necessary to render the fruits of the revolution a full reward for the blood, the toils, the cares and the calamities which have purchased it. But the object of which the necessity will be peculiarly felt, and which it is peculiarly the duty of congress to inculcate, is the provision recommended for the national debt. Although this debt is greater than could have been wished, it is still less on the whole than could have been expected; and when referred to the cause in which it has been incurred, and compared with the burthens which wars of ambition and of vain glory have entailed on other nations, ought to be borne not only with cheerfulness but with pride. But the magnitude of the debt makes no part of the question. It is sufficient that the debt has been fairly contracted, and that justice and good faith demand that it should be fully discharged. Congress had no option but between different modes of discharging it. The same option is the only one that can exist with the states. The mode which has after long and elaborate discussion, been preferred, is, we are persuaded, the least objectionable of any that would have been equal to the purpose. Under this persuasion, we call upon the justice and plighted faith of the several states to give it its proper effect, to reflect on the consequences of rejecting it, and to remember that congress will not be answerable for them."

After expatiating on the merits of the several creditors, the report concludes, "let it be remembered finally, that it ever has been the pride and boast of America, that the rights for which she contended, were the rights of human nature. By the blessing of the Author of these rights, on the means exerted for their defence, they have prevailed against all opposition, and formed the basis of thirteen independent states. No instance has heretofore occurred, nor can any instance be expected hereafter to occur, in which the unadulterated forms of republican government can pretend to so fair an opportunity of justifying themselves by their fruits. In this view, the citizens of the United States are responsible for the greatest trust ever confided to a political society. If justice, good faith, honour, gratitude, and all the other good qualities which ennoble the character of a nation, and fulfil the ends of government, be the fruits of our establishments, the cause of liberty will acquire a dignity and lustre which it has never yet enjoyed; and an example will be set, which can not but have the most favourable influence on the rights of mankind. If, on the other side, our governments should be unfortunately blotted with the reverse of these cardinal and essential virtues, the great cause which we have engaged to vindicate will be dishonoured and betrayed; the last and fairest experiment in favour of the rights of human nature will be turned against them, and their patrons and friends exposed to be insulted and silenced by the votaries of tyranny and usurpation."

For the complete success of the plan recommended by congress, no person felt more anxious solicitude than General Washington. Of the vital importance of UNION, no man could be more entirely persuaded; and of the obligations of the government to its creditors, no man could feel a stronger conviction. His conspicuous station had rendered him peculiarly sensible to their claims; and he had unavoidably been personally instrumental in the creation of a part of them. All the feelings of his heart were deeply engaged in the payment of some of the creditors and that high sense of national honour, of national justice, and of national faith, of which elevated minds endowed with integrity can never be divested, impelled him to take a strong interest in the security of all. Availing himself of the usage of communicating on national subjects with the state governments, and of the opportunity, which his approaching resignation of the command of the army gave, impressively to convey his sentiments to them, he had determined to employ all the influence which the circumstances of his life had created in a solemn recommendation of measures, on which he believed the happiness and prosperity of his country to depend. On the eighth of June, 1783, he addressed the governors of the several states respectively, the paternal and affectionate letter which follows.

"Sir,

"The great object for which I had the honour to hold an appointment in the service of my country being accomplished, I am now preparing to resign it into the hands of congress, and to return to that domestic retirement, which, it is well known, I left with the greatest reluctance; a retirement for which I have never ceased to sigh through a long and painful absence, and in which (remote from the noise and trouble of the world) I meditate to pass the remainder of life in a state of undisturbed repose. But before I carry this resolution into effect, I think it a duty incumbent upon me, to make this my last official communication; to congratulate you on the glorious events which heaven has been pleased to produce in our favour; to offer my sentiments respecting some important subjects which appear to me to be intimately connected with the tranquillity of the United States: to take my leave of your excellency as a public character: and to give my final blessing to that country in whose service I have spent the prime of my life, for whose sake I have consumed so many anxious days and watchful nights, and whose happiness, being extremely dear to me, will always constitute no inconsiderable part of my own.

"Impressed with the liveliest sensibility on this pleasing occasion, I will claim the indulgence of dilating the more copiously on the subjects of our mutual felicitation. When we consider the magnitude of the prize we contended for, the doubtful nature of the contest, and the favourable manner in which it has terminated, we shall find the greatest possible reason for gratitude and rejoicing. This is a theme that will afford infinite delight to every benevolent and liberal mind, whether the event in contemplation be considered as the source of present enjoyment, or the parent of future happiness: and we shall have equal occasion to felicitate ourselves on the lot which Providence has assigned us, whether we view it in a natural, a political, or moral point of light.

"The citizens of America, placed in the most enviable condition, as the sole lords and proprietors of a vast tract of continent, comprehending all the various soils and climates of the world, and abounding with all the necessaries and conveniences of life, are now, by the late satisfactory pacification, acknowledged to be possessed of absolute freedom and independency. They are from this period, to be considered as the actors on a most conspicuous theatre, which seems to be peculiarly designated by Providence for the display of human greatness and felicity. Here they are not only surrounded with every thing which can contribute to the completion of private and domestic enjoyment; but heaven has crowned all its other blessings, by giving a fairer opportunity for political happiness, than any other nation has ever been favoured with. Nothing can illustrate these observations more forcibly, than a recollection of the happy conjecture of times and circumstances, under which our republic assumed its rank among the nations. The foundation of our empire was not laid in the gloomy age of ignorance and superstition, but at an epocha when the rights of mankind were better understood, and more clearly defined, than at any former period. The researches of the human mind after social happiness, have been carried to a great extent; the treasures of knowledge acquired by the labours of philosophers, sages, and legislators, through a long succession of years, are laid open for our use; and their collected wisdom may be happily employed in the establishment of our forms of government. The free cultivation of letters; the unbounded extension of commerce; the progressive refinement of manners; the growing liberality of sentiment; and above all, the pure and benign light of revelation; have had a meliorating influence on mankind, and increased the blessings of society. At this auspicious period, the United States came into existence as a nation; and if their citizens should not be completely free and happy, the fault will be entirely their own.

"Such is our situation, and such are our prospects. But notwithstanding the cup of blessing is thus reached out to us; notwithstanding happiness is ours, if we have a disposition to seize the occasion, and make it our own; yet, it appears to me, there is an option still left to the United States of America; that it is in their choice, and depends upon their conduct, whether they will be respectable and prosperous, or contemptible and miserable as a nation. This is the time of their political probation; this is the moment when the eyes of the whole world are turned upon them; this is the moment to establish or ruin their national character forever; this is the favourable moment to give such a tone to our federal government, as will enable it to answer the ends of its institution, or this may may be the ill-fated moment for relaxing the powers of the union, annihilating the cement of the confederations, and exposing us to become the sport of European politics, which may play one state against another, to prevent their growing importance, and to serve their own interested purposes. For according to the system of policy the states shall adopt at this moment, they will stand or fall; and by their confirmation or lapse, it is yet to be decided, whether the revolution must ultimately be considered a blessing or a curse:—a blessing or a curse not to the present age alone, for with our fate will the destiny of unborn millions be involved.

"With this conviction of the importance of the present crisis, silence in me would be a crime. I will therefore speak to your excellency the language of freedom and of sincerity, without disguise. I am aware, however, that those who differ from me in political sentiment, may perhaps remark that I am stepping out of the proper line of my duty, and may possibly ascribe to arrogance or ostentation, what I know is alone the result of the purest intentions. But the rectitude of my own heart, which disdains such unworthy motives; the part I have hitherto acted in life; the determination I have formed of not taking any share in public business hereafter; the ardent desire I feel, and shall continue to manifest, of quietly enjoying, in private life, after all the toils of war, the benefits of a wise and liberal government: will I flatter myself, sooner or later convince my countrymen, that I could have no sinister views in delivering with so little reserve the opinions contained in this address.

"There are four things which I humbly conceive, are essential to the well being, I may even venture to say, to the existence of the United States as an independent power.

1st. An indissoluble union of the states under one federal head.

2d. A sacred regard to public justice.

3d. The adoption of a proper peace establishment, and,

4th. The prevalence of that pacific and friendly disposition, among the people of the United States, which will induce them to forget their local prejudices and politics, to make those mutual concessions which are requisite to the general prosperity, and in some instances, to sacrifice their individual advantages to the interest of the community.

"These are the pillars on which the glorious fabric of our independency and national character must be supported. Liberty is the basis, and whoever would dare to sap the foundation, or overturn the structure, under whatever specious pretext he may attempt it, will merit the bitterest execration, and the severest punishment, which can be inflicted by his injured country.

"On the three first articles, I will make a few observations, leaving the last to the good sense and serious consideration of those immediately concerned.

"Under the first head, although it may not be necessary or proper for me, in this place, to enter into a particular disquisition of the principles of the union, and to take up the great question which has frequently been agitated, whether it be expedient and requisite for the state to delegate a larger proportion of power to congress or not; yet it will be a part of my duty, and that of every true patriot, to assert without reserve, and to insist upon the following positions: that unless the states will suffer congress to exercise those prerogatives they are undoubtedly invested with by the constitution, every thing must very rapidly tend to anarchy and confusion: that it is indispensable to the happiness of the individual states, that there should be lodged somewhere a supreme power to regulate and govern the general concerns of the confederated republic, without which the union can not be of long duration: that there must be a faithful and pointed compliance, on the part of every state, with the late proposals and demands of congress, or the most fatal consequences will ensue: that whatever measures have a tendency to dissolve the union, or contribute to violate or lessen the sovereign authority, ought to be considered as hostile to the liberty and independence of America, and the authors of them treated accordingly: and lastly, that unless we can be enabled, by the concurrence of the states, to participate of the fruits of the revolution, and enjoy the essential benefits of civil society, under a form of government so free and uncorrupted, so happily guarded against the danger of oppression as has been devised and adopted by the articles of confederation, it will be a subject of regret, that so much blood and treasure have been lavished for no purpose; that so many sufferings have been encountered without a compensation; and that so many sacrifices have been made in vain. Many other considerations might here be adduced to prove, that without an entire conformity to the spirit of the union, we can not exist as an independent power. It will be sufficient for my purpose to mention one or two, which seem to be of the greatest importance. It is only in our united character that we are known as an empire, that our independence is acknowledged, that our power can be regarded, or our credit supported among foreign nations. The treaties of the European powers with the United States of America, will have no validity on a dissolution of the union. We shall be left nearly in a state of nature, or we may find, by our own unhappy experience, that, there is a natural and necessary progression from the extreme of anarchy to the extreme of tyrrany; and that arbitrary power is most easily established on the ruins of liberty abused to licentiousness.

"As to the second article, which respects the performance of public justice, congress have in their late address to the United States, almost exhausted the subject. They have explained their ideas so fully, and have enforced the obligations the states are under, to render complete justice to all the public creditors, with so much dignity and energy, that in my opinion, no real friend to the honour and independency of America, can hesitate a single moment respecting the propriety of complying with the just and honourable measures proposed. If their arguments do not produce conviction, I know of nothing that will have greater influence; especially when we recollect that the system referred to, being the result of the collected wisdom of the continent, must be esteemed, if not perfect, certainly the least objectionable of any that could be devised; and that if it should not be carried into immediate execution, a national bankruptcy, with all its deplorable consequences, will take place before any different plan can possibly be proposed and adopted. So pressing are the present circumstances, and such is the alternative now offered to the states.

"The ability of the country to discharge the debts which have been incurred in its defence is not to be doubted; an inclination I flatter myself will not be wanting. The path of our duty is plain before us—honesty will be found, on every experiment, to be the best and only true policy. Let us then as a nation, be just; let us fulfil the public contracts which congress had undoubtedly a right to make, for the purpose of carrying on the war, with the same good faith we suppose ourselves bound to perform our private engagements. In the mean time, let an attention to the cheerful performance of their proper business as individuals, and as members of society, be earnestly inculcated on the citizens of America. Then will they strengthen the hands of government, and be happy under its protection. Every one will reap the fruit of his labours; every one will enjoy his own acquisitions, without molestation, and without danger.

"In this state of absolute freedom and perfect security, who will grudge to yield a very little of his property to support the common interest of society, and insure the protection of government? Who does not remember the frequent declarations, at the commencement of the war, that we should be completely satisfied, if at the expense of one half, we could defend the remainder of our possessions? Where is the man to be found who wishes to remain indebted for the defence of his own person and property, to the exertions, the bravery, and the blood of others, without making one generous effort to repay the debt of honour and of gratitude? In what part of the continent shall we find any man or body of men, who would not blush to stand up and propose measures purposely calculated to rob the soldier of his stipend, and the public creditor of his due? And were it possible that such a flagrant instance of injustice could ever happen, would it not excite the general indignation, and tend to bring down upon the authors of such measures, the aggravated vengeance of heaven? If, after all, a spirit of disunion, or a temper of obstinacy and perverseness, should manifest itself in any of the states; if such an ungracious disposition should attempt to frustrate all the happy effects that might be expected to flow from the union; if there should be a refusal to comply with the requisitions for funds to discharge the annual interest of the public debts; and if that refusal should revive again all those jealousies, and produce all those evils, which are now happily removed; congress, who have in all their transactions, shown a great degree of magnanimity and justice, will stand justified in the sight of God and man; and the state alone which puts itself in opposition to the aggregate wisdom of the continent, and follows such mistaken and pernicious counsels, will be responsible for all the consequences.

"For my own part, conscious of having acted while a servant of the public, in the manner I conceived best suited to promote the real interests of my country; having, in consequence of my fixed belief, in some measure pledged myself to the army, that their country would finally do them complete and ample justice; and not wishing to conceal any instance of my official conduct from the eyes of the world; I have thought proper to transmit to your excellency the enclosed collection of papers, relative to the half pay and commutation granted by congress to the officers of the army. From these communications, my decided sentiments will be clearly comprehended, together with the conclusive reasons which induced me, at an early period, to recommend the adoption of the measure, in the most earnest and serious manner. As the proceedings of congress, the army, and myself, are open to all, and contain, in my opinion, sufficient information to remove the prejudices, and errors, which may have been entertained by any, I think it unnecessary to say any thing more than just to observe, that the resolutions of congress now alluded to, are undoubtedly as absolutely binding upon the United States, as the most solemn acts of confederation or legislation. As to the idea which I am informed, has in some instances prevailed, that the half pay and commutation are to be regarded merely in the odious light of a pension, it ought to be exploded for ever. That provision should be viewed as it really was, a reasonable compensation offered by congress, at a time when they had nothing else to give to the officers of the army, for services then to be performed. It was the only means to prevent a total dereliction of the service.—It was a part of their hire.—I may be allowed to say it was the price of their blood, and of your independence. It is therefore more than a common debt; it is a debt of honour. It can never be considered as a pension, or gratuity; nor be cancelled until it is fairly discharged.

"With regard to a distinction between officers and soldiers, it is sufficient that the uniform experience of every nation of the world, combined with your own, proves the utility and propriety of the discrimination. Rewards in proportion to the aids the public derives from them, are unquestionably due to all its servants. In some lines, the soldiers have perhaps generally had as ample a compensation for their services, by the large bounties which have been paid to them, as their officers will receive in the proposed commutation; in others, if besides the donation of lands, the payment of arrearages, of clothing and wages, (in which articles all the component parts of the army must be put upon the same footing,) we take into the estimate the bounties many of the soldiers have received, and the gratuity of one year's full pay which is promised to all, possibly their situation (every circumstance duly considered) will not be deemed less eligible than that of the officers. Should a further reward, however, be judged equitable, I will venture to assert, no one will enjoy greater satisfaction than myself, on seeing an exemption from taxes for a limited time, (which has been petitioned for in some instances,) or any other adequate immunity or compensation, granted to the brave defenders of their country's cause. But neither the adoption nor rejection of this proposition will in any manner affect, much less militate against, the act of congress, by which they have offered five years full pay, in lieu of the half pay for life, which had been before promised to the officers of the army.

"Before I conclude the subject of public justice, I can not omit to mention the obligations this country is under to that meritorious class of veteran non-commissioned officers and privates who have been discharged for inability, in consequence of the resolution of congress of the 23d April, 1782, on an annual pension for life. Their peculiar sufferings, their singular merits, and claims to that provision, need only be known, to interest all the feelings of humanity in their behalf. Nothing but a punctual payment of their annual allowance can rescue them from the most complicated misery, and nothing could be a more melancholy and distressing sight, than to behold those who have shed their blood or lost their limbs in the service of their country, without a shelter, without a friend, and without the means of obtaining any of the necessaries or comforts of life; compelled to beg their daily bread from door to door. Suffer me to recommend those of this description, belonging to your state, to the warmest patronage of your excellency and your legislature.

"It is necessary to say but a few words on the third topic which was proposed, and which regards particularly the defence of the republic, as there can be little doubt but congress will recommend a proper peace establishment for the United States, in which a due attention will be paid to the importance of placing the militia of the union upon a regular and respectable footing. If this should be the case, I would beg leave to urge the great advantage of it in the strongest terms. The militia of this country must be considered as the palladium of our security, and the first effectual resort in case of hostility. It is essential, therefore, that the same system should pervade the whole; that the formation and discipline of the militia of the continent should be absolutely uniform, and that the same species of arms, accoutrements, and military apparatus should be introduced in every part of the United States. No one who has not learned it from experience, can conceive the difficulty, expense, and confusion, which result from a contrary system, or the vague arrangements which have hitherto prevailed.

"If in treating of political points, a greater latitude than usual has been taken in the course of this address, the importance of the crisis, and magnitude of the objects in discussion, must be my apology. It is, however, neither my wish or expectation, that the preceding observations should claim any regard, except so far as they shall appear to be dictated by a good intention, consonant to the immediate rules of justice, calculated to produce a liberal system of policy, and founded on whatever experience may have been acquired by a long and close attention to public business. Here I might speak with the more confidence, from my actual observations; and, if it would not swell this letter (already too prolix) beyond the bounds I had prescribed myself, I could demonstrate to every mind open to conviction, that in less time, and with much less expense than has been incurred, the war might have been brought to the same happy conclusion, if the resources of the continent could have been properly drawn forth; and the distresses and disappointments which have very often occurred, have, in too many instances, resulted more from a want of energy in the continental government, than a deficiency of means in the particular states: that the inefficacy of measures, arising from the want of an adequate authority in the supreme power, from a partial compliance with the requisitions of congress in some of the states, and from a failure of punctuality in others, while it tended to damp the zeal of those which were more willing to exert themselves, served also to accumulate the expenses of the war, and to frustrate the best concerted plans; and that the discouragement occasioned by the complicated difficulties and embarrassments in which our affairs were by this means involved, would have long ago produced the dissolution of any army less patient, less virtuous, and less persevering, than that which I have had the honour to command. But while I mention these things which are notorious facts, as the defects of our federal constitution, particularly in the prosecution of a war, I beg it may be understood, that as I have ever taken a pleasure in gratefully acknowledging the assistance and support I have derived from every class of citizens, so shall I always be happy to do justice to the unparalleled exertions of the individual states, on many interesting occasions.

"I have thus freely disclosed what I wished to make known before I surrendered up my public trust to those who committed it to me. The task is now accomplished. I now bid adieu to your excellency as the chief magistrate of your state; at the same time I bid a last farewell to the cares of office and all the employments of public life.

"It remains then to be my final and only request, that your excellency will communicate these sentiments to your legislature at their next meeting; and that they may be considered as the legacy of one who has ardently wished, on all occasions, to be useful to his country; and who, even in the shade of retirement, will not fail to implore the divine benediction upon it.

"I now make it my earnest prayer that God would have you, and the state over which you preside, in his holy protection, that he would incline the hearts of the citizens to cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to government; to entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another, for their fellow citizens of the United States at large, and particularly for their brethren who have served in the field, and finally, that he would most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility, and pacific temper of mind, which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed religion; without an humble imitation of whose example in these things we can never hope to be a happy nation."

The impression made by this solemn and affecting admonition could not be surpassed. The circumstances under which it was given, added to the veneration with which it was received; and, like the counsel of a parent on whom the grave is about to close forever, it sunk deep into the hearts of all. But, like the counsels of a parent withdrawn from view, the advice was too soon forgotten, and the impression it had made was too soon effaced.

The recommendations of congress did not receive that prompt consideration which the public exigence demanded, nor did they meet that universal assent which was necessary to give them effect.

Not immediately perceiving that the error lay in a system which was unfit for use, the distinguished patriots of the revolution contemplated with increasing anxiety, the anti-American temper which displayed itself in almost every part of the union. The letters addressed to the late Commander-in-chief, by many of those who had borne a conspicuous part in the arduous struggle for independence, manifest the disappointment and chagrin occasioned by this temper. The venerable Trumbull, who had rendered great service to the cause of united America; who, like Washington, had supported the burden of office throughout a hazardous contest, and like Washington, had determined to withdraw from the cares of a public station when that contest should be terminated, in a letter communicating to his friend and compatriot the resolution he had taken, thus disclosed the fears which the dispositions manifested by many of his countrymen inspired. "The fruits of our peace and independence do not at present wear so promising an appearance as I had fondly painted to my mind. The prejudices, the jealousies, and turbulence of the people, at times, almost stagger my confidence in our political establishments; and almost occasion me to think that they will show themselves unworthy of the noble prize for which we have contended, and which, I had pleased myself with the hope, we were so near enjoying. But again, I check this rising impatience, and console myself under the present prospect with the consideration, that the same beneficent and wise Providence which has done so much for this country, will not eventually leave us to ruin our own happiness, to become the sport of chance, or the scoff of a once admiring world; but that great things are yet in store for this people, which time and the wisdom of the Great Director will produce in its best season."

"It is indeed a pleasure," said General Washington in reply, "from the walks of private life to view in retrospect the difficulties through which we have waded, and the happy haven into which our ship has been brought. Is it possible after this that it should founder? will not the all wise and all powerful Director of human events preserve it? I think he will. He may, however, for some wise purpose of his own, suffer our indiscretions and folly to place our national character low in the political scale; —and this, unless more wisdom and less prejudice take the lead in our government, will most certainly happen."

That the imbecility of the federal government, the impotence of its requisitions, and the inattention of some of the states to its recommendations, would, in the estimation of the world, abase the American character, could scarcely be termed a prediction. That course of national degradation had already commenced.

As the system recommended to the states on the 18th of April, 1783, had been matured by the best wisdom in the federal councils, a compliance with it was the last hope of the government; and congress continued to urge its adoption on the several states. While its fate remained undecided, requisitions for the intermediate supply of the national demands were annually repeated, and were annually neglected. Happily, a loan had been negotiated in Holland by Mr. Adams, after the termination of the war, out of which the interest of the foreign debt had been partly paid; but that fund was exhausted, and the United States possessed no means of replacing it. Unable to pay the interest, they would, in the course of the succeeding year, be liable for the first instalment of the principal; and the humiliating circumstance was to be encountered of a total failure to comply with the most solemn engagements, unaccompanied with the prospect of being enabled to give assurances, that, at any future time, their situation would be more eligible. If the condition of the domestic creditors was not absolutely desperate, the prospect of obtaining satisfaction for their claims was so distant and uncertain, that their evidences of debt were transferred at an eighth, and even at a tenth of their nominal value. The distress consequent on this depreciation was great and afflicting. "The requisitions of congress for eight years past," say the committee in February, 1786, to whom the subject of the revenue had been referred, "have been so irregular in their operation, so uncertain in their collection, and so evidently unproductive, that a reliance on them in future as a source from whence moneys are to be drawn to discharge the engagements of the confederacy, definite as they are in time and amount, would be not less dishonourable to the understandings of those who entertain such confidence, than it would be dangerous to the welfare and peace of the union." Under public embarrassments which were daily increasing, it had become, it was said, the duty of congress to declare most explicitly that the crisis *had* arrived, when the people of the United States, by whose will, and for whose benefit, the federal government was instituted, must decide whether they will support their rank as a nation, by maintaining the public faith at home and abroad, or whether for want of a timely exertion in establishing a general revenue, and thereby giving strength to the confederacy, they will hazard not only the existence of the union, but of those great and invaluable privileges for which they have so arduously and so honourably contended."

The revenue system of the 18th of April, 1783, was again solemnly recommended to the consideration of the several states, and their unanimous and early accession to it was declared to be the only measure which could enable congress to preserve the public faith, and to avoid the fatal evils which will inevitably flow from "a violation of those principles of justice which are the only solid basis of the honour and prosperity of nations."

In framing this system, a revenue adequate to the funding of the whole national debt had been contemplated, and no part of it was to go into operation until the whole should be adopted. By suspending partial relief to the pressing necessities of the government, it was believed that complete relief would be the more certainly secured.

The enlightened and virtuous statesmen with whom that measure originated, thought it impossible that their countrymen would be so unmindful of the obligations of honour and of justice, or could so mistake their real interests, as to withhold their assent from the entire plan, if convinced that no partial compliance with it would be received. In the progress of the business, however, there was reason to believe that the impost might be conceded, but that the application for internal taxes would encounter difficulties not to be surmounted. In the impoverished state of the federal treasury, an incompetent revenue was preferred to no revenue; and it was deemed more adviseable to accept a partial compliance with the recommendations of congress, than, by inflexibly adhering to the integrity of the system, to lose the whole. The states therefore, were requested to enable congress, "to carry into effect that part which related to impost so soon as it should be acceded to." In the course of the year 1786, every state in the union had acted upon the recommendation, and, with the exception of New York, had granted the impost duty which had been required. New York had passed an act upon the subject; but, influenced by its jealousy of the federal government, had not vested in congress the power of collection, but had reserved to itself the sole right of levying the duties according to its own laws. Neither did the act permit the collectors to be made accountable to congress. To the state only were they amenable. In addition to these deviations from the plan recommended, New York had emitted bills of credit, which were liable to depreciation, and in them the duties were payable. As the failure on the part of this single state, suspended the operation of the grants made by all the others, the executive thereof was requested again to convene the legislature, in order to lay the subject once more before them. To a similar resolution Governor Clinton had already replied, that "he had not power to convene the legislature before the time fixed by law for their stated meeting, except on extraordinary occasions, and as the present business proposed for their consideration had already been repeatedly laid before them, and so recently as at their last session had received their determination, it could not come within that description." This second resolution was not more successful than that which preceded it, and thus was finally defeated the laborious and persevering effort made by the federal government to obtain from the states the means of preserving, in whole or in part, the faith of the nation. General Washington's letters of that period abound with passages showing the solicitude with which he watched the progress of this recommendation, and the chagrin with which he viewed the obstacles to its adoption. In a letter of October, 1785, he said, "the war, as you have very justly observed, has terminated most advantageously for America, and a fair field is presented to our view; but I confess to you freely, my dear sir, that I do not think we possess wisdom or justice enough to cultivate it properly. Illiberality, jealousy, and local policy, mix too much in our public councils, for the good government of the union. In a word, the confederation appears to me to be little more than a shadow without the substance; and congress a nugatory body, their ordinances being little attended to. To *me,* it is a solecism in politics:—indeed it is one of the most extraordinary things in nature, that we should confederate as a nation, and yet be afraid to give the rulers of that nation, who are the creatures of our own making, appointed for a limited and short duration, and who are amenable for every action, recallable at any moment, and subject to all the evils which they may be instrumental in producing,—sufficient powers to order and direct the affairs of the same. By such policy as this, the wheels of government are clogged, and our brightest prospects, and that high expectation which was entertained of us by the wondering world, are turned into astonishment; and from the high ground on which we stood, we are descending into the vale of confusion and darkness.

"That we have it in our power to become one of the most respectable nations upon earth, admits, in my humble opinion, of no doubt, if we would but pursue a wise, just and liberal policy towards one another, and would keep good faith with the rest of the world:—that our resources are ample and increasing, none can deny; but while they are grudgingly applied, or not applied at all, we give a vital stab to public faith, and will sink in the eyes of Europe, into contempt."

CHAPTER IV

1783 to 1787.

While the friends of the national government were making these unavailing efforts to invest it with a revenue which might enable it to preserve the national faith, many causes concurred to prepare the public mind for some great and radical change in the political system of America.

Scarcely had the war of the revolution terminated, when the United States and Great Britain reciprocally charged each other with violations of the treaty of peace. On the construction of that part of the seventh article which stipulates against the "destruction or carrying away of any negroes, or other property of the American inhabitants," a serious difference of opinion prevailed which could not be easily accommodated. As men seldom allow much weight to the reasoning of an adversary, the construction put upon that article by the cabinet of London was generally treated in America as a mere evasion; and the removal of the negroes who had joined the British army on the faith of a proclamation offering them freedom, was considered as a flagrant breach of faith. In addition to this circumstance, the troops of his Britannic Majesty still retained possession of the posts on the American side of the great lakes. As those posts gave their possessors a decided influence over the warlike tribes of Indians in their neighbourhood, this was a subject to which the United States were peculiarly sensible.

On the other hand, the United States were charged with infringing the fourth, fifth, and sixth articles, which contain agreements respecting the payment of debts, the confiscation of property, and prosecution of individuals for the part taken by them during the war.

On the 14th of January, 1784, the day on which the definitive articles were ratified, congress passed a resolution containing a recommendation in the words of the treaty, respecting confiscated property, which was transmitted without delay to the several states. They considered this resolution as merely formal; and contended that neither the American nor the British government expected from it any beneficial results. But other stipulations which are explicit, the performance of which was not to rest on the recommendation of the government, especially that respecting the payment of debts, were also neglected. These causes of mutual complaint being permitted to rankle for some time in the bosoms of both nations, produced a considerable degree of irritation. The British merchants had large credits in America. Those engaged in the colonial trade had been nearly ruined by the rupture between the two countries; and, without taking into the account the embarrassments in which the war had involved their debtors, they calculated, after the restoration of peace, on the prompt collection of the vast sums which were due to them. But the impediments to the recovery of debts were, in many instances, permitted to remain; and the dispositions manifested by those states in which they were chiefly due, did not authorize a belief that any favourable change of measures was about to take place. The complaints of the creditors were loud and incessant. They openly charged the American government with violating the most solemn obligations which public and private contract could create; and this charge affected the national character the more seriously, because the terms of the treaty were universally deemed highly advantageous to the United States. The recriminations on the part of individuals in America, were also uttered with the angry vehemence of men who believe themselves to be suffering unprovoked injuries. The negroes in possession of the British armies at the restoration of peace, belonged, in many cases, to actual debtors; and in all, to persons who required the labour of which they were thus deprived, to repair the multiplied losses produced by the war. To the detention of the posts on the lakes was ascribed the hostile temper manifested by the Indians; and thus, to the indignity of permitting a foreign power to maintain garrisons within the limits of the nation, were superadded the murders perpetrated by the savages, and the consequent difficulty of settling the fertile and vacant lands of the west.[1] On the north-eastern frontier too, the British were charged with making encroachments on the territory of the United States. On that side, the river St. Croix, from its source to its mouth in the bay of Passamaquoddy, is the boundary between the two nations. Three rivers of that name empty into the bay. The Americans claimed the most eastern, as the real St. Croix, while settlements were actually made under the authority of the government of Nova Scotia to the middle river, and the town of St. Andrews was established on its banks.

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[1] See note, No. III at the end of the volume.

But the cause of most extensive disquiet was the rigorous commercial system pursued by Great Britain. While colonists, the Americans had carried on a free and gainful trade with the British West Indies. Those ports were closed against them as citizens of an independent state; and their accustomed intercourse with other parts of the empire also was interrupted by the navigation act. To explore new channels for the commerce of the nation was, in the actual state of things, opposed by obstacles which almost discouraged the attempt. On every side they met with rigorous and unlooked for restrictions. Their trade with the colonies of other powers, as well as with those of England, was prohibited; and in all the ports of Europe they encountered regulations which were extremely embarrassing. From the Mediterranean, they were excluded by the Barbary powers, whose hostility they had no force to subdue, and whose friendship they had no money to purchase. Thus the characteristic enterprise of their merchants, which, in better times, has displayed their flag in every ocean, was then in a great measure restrained from exerting itself by the scantiness of their means. These commercial difficulties suggested the idea of compelling Great Britain to relax the rigour of her system, by opposing it with regulations equally restrictive; but to render success in such a conflict possible, it was necessary that the whole power of regulating commerce should reside in a single legislature. Few were so sanguine as to hope that thirteen independent governments, jealous of each other, could be induced to concur for a length of time, in measures capable of producing the desired effect. With many, therefore, the desire of counteracting a system which appeared to them so injurious, triumphed over their attachment to state sovereignty; and the converts to the opinion that congress ought to be empowered to regulate trade, were daily multiplied. Meanwhile, the United States were unremitting in their endeavours to form commercial treaties in Europe. Three commissioners had been appointed for that purpose; and at length, as the trade with England was peculiarly important, and the growing misunderstandings between the two countries threatened serious consequences should their adjustment be much longer delayed, Mr. John Adams was appointed minister plenipotentiary to the court of St. James. His endeavours to form a commercial treaty were not successful. His overtures were declined by the cabinet of London, because the government of the United States was unable to secure the observance of any general commercial regulations; and it was deemed unwise to enter into stipulations which could not be of reciprocal obligation. In fact, it is not probable that, had even this difficulty been surmounted, Britain could have been induced to grant advantages that would have been satisfactory to America. The latter expected great relaxations of the navigation act, and a free admission into the colonies of the former; and believed its commerce of sufficient importance to obtain these objects, if it could be regulated by a single legislature. The reflecting part of America did not require this additional evidence of the sacrifice which had been made of national interest on the altars of state jealousy, to demonstrate the defectiveness of the existing system. On the mind of no person had this impression been more strongly made, than on that of General Washington. His extensive correspondence bears ample testimony to the solicitude with which he contemplated the proceedings of the states on this interesting subject.

The opinion he sought to inculcate was, that the trade between the United States and Great Britain was equally important to each; and therefore, that a commercial intercourse between the two nations might be established on equal terms, if the political arrangements in America would enable its government to guard its interests; but without such arrangements, those interests could not be protected, and America must appear in a very contemptible point of view to those with whom she was endeavouring to form commercial treaties, without possessing the means of carrying them into effect:—who "must see and feel that the union, or the states individually are sovereign as best suits their purposes:—in a word, that we are one nation to-day, and thirteen to-morrow. Who," he added, "will treat with us on such terms?"

About this time, General Washington received a long and affectionate letter from the Marquis de Lafayette, who had just returned from a tour through the north of Europe. In communicating the occurrences at the courts he had visited, and especially at that of Prussia, whose aged and distinguished monarch, uniting the acquirements of the scholar and the statesman with the most profound skill in the art of war, could confer either literary or military fame, he dwelt with enthusiasm on the plaudits which were universally bestowed on his military patron and paternal friend. "I wish," he added, "the other sentiments I have had occasion to discover with respect to America, were equally satisfactory with those that are personal to yourself. I need not say that the spirit, the firmness, with which the revolution was conducted, has excited universal admiration:—That every friend to the rights of mankind is an enthusiast for the principles on which those constitutions are built:—but I have often had the mortification to hear, that the want of powers in congress, of union between the states, of energy in their government, would make the confederation very insignificant. "By their conduct in the revolution," he added, "the citizens of America have commanded the respect of the world; but it grieves me to think they will in a measure lose it, unless they strengthen the confederation, give congress power to regulate their trade, pay off their debt, or at least the interest of it, establish a well regulated militia, and, in a word, complete all those measures which you have recommended to them."

"Unhappily for us," said the general in reply, "though the reports you mention are greatly exaggerated, our conduct has laid the foundation for them. It is one of the evils of democratic governments, that the people, not always seeing, and frequently misled, must often feel before they act right. But evils of this nature seldom fail to work their own cure. It is to be lamented, nevertheless, that the remedies are so slow, and that those who wish to apply them seasonably, are not attended to before they suffer in person, in interest, and in reputation.

I am not without hopes that matters will soon take a favourable turn in the federal constitution. The discerning part of the community have long since seen the necessity of giving adequate powers to congress for national purposes, and those of a different description must yield to it ere long."

While the recommendation of the 30th of April, 1784, was before the states, many causes contributed to diffuse through the community such a general dissatisfaction with the existing state of things, as to prepare the way for some essential change in the American system. In the course of the long war which had been carried on in the bosom of their country, the people of the United States had been greatly impoverished. Their property had been seized for the support of both armies; and much of their labour had been drawn from agriculture for the performance of military service. The naval power of their enemy had almost annihilated their commerce; from which resulted the two-fold calamity, that imported commodities were enhanced to an enormous price, while those for exportation were reduced much below their ordinary value. The inevitable consequence was, that those consumable articles which habit had rendered necessary, were exhausted; and peace found the American people, not only destitute of the elegancies, and even of the conveniences of life, but also without the means of procuring them, otherwise than by anticipating the proceeds of future industry. On opening their ports, an immense quantity of foreign merchandise was introduced into the country, and they were tempted by the sudden cheapness of imported goods, and by their own wants, to purchase beyond their capacities for payment. Into this indiscretion, they were in some measure beguiled by their own sanguine calculations on the value which a free trade would bestow on the produce of their soil, and by a reliance on those evidences of the public debt which were in the hands of most of them. So extravagantly too did many estimate the temptation which equal liberty and vacant lands would hold out to emigrants from the old world, as to entertain the opinion that Europe was about to empty itself into America, and that the United States would derive from that source such an increase of population, as would enhance their lands to a price heretofore not even conjectured. Co-operating with the cause last mentioned, was the impression which had been made by paper money on public morals, and on public opinion. It had not escaped observation that every purchaser on credit, however excessive the price might apparently be, had not only been relieved by the depreciation, but had derived great gains from his contract. Speculating on a similar course of things, many individuals had made extensive purchases at high prices; and had thus contributed to continue for a time, the deception imposed on themselves by those who supposed that the revolution was a talisman, whose magic powers were capable of changing the nature of things. The delusive hopes created by these visionary calculations were soon dissipated, and a great proportion of the inhabitants found themselves involved in debts they were unable to discharge. One of the consequences resulting from this unprosperous state of things was a general discontent with the course of trade. It had commenced with the native merchants of the north, who found themselves incapable of contending in their own ports with foreigners; and was soon communicated to others. The gazettes of Boston contained some very animated and angry addresses, which produced resolutions for the government of the citizens of that town, applications to their state legislature, a petition to congress, and a circular letter to the merchants of the several sea-ports throughout the United States. After detailing the disadvantages under which the trade and navigation of America laboured, and expressing their confidence that the necessary powers to the federal government would be soon, if not already, delegated, the petition to congress thus concludes: "Impressed with these ideas, your petitioners beg leave to request of the very august body which they have now the honour to address, that the numerous impositions of the British, on the trade and exports of these states, may be forthwith contravened by similar expedients on our part: else may it please your excellency and honours, the commerce of this country, and of consequence its wealth, and perhaps the union itself, may become victims to the artifice of a nation whose arms have been in vain exerted to accomplish the ruin of America."

The merchants of the city of Philadelphia presented a memorial to the legislature of that state, in which, after lamenting it as a fundamental defect in the constitution that full and entire power over the commerce of the United States had not been originally vested in congress, "as no concern common to many could be conducted to a good end, but by a unity of councils;" they say; "hence it is that the intercourse of the states are liable to be perplexed and injured by various and discordant regulations, instead of that harmony of measures on which the particular, as well as general interests depend; productive of mutual disgusts, and alienation among the several members of the empire.

"But the more certain inconveniences foreseen and now experimentally felt, flow from the unequal footing this circumstance puts us on with other nations, and by which we stand in a very singular and disadvantageous situation; for while the whole of our trade is laid open to these nations, they are at liberty to limit us to such branches of theirs as interest or policy may dictate:—unrestrained by any apprehensions, as long as the power remains severally with the states, of being met and opposed by any consistent and effectual restrictions on our part."

This memorial prayed that the legislature would endeavour to procure from congress, a recommendation to the several states, to vest in that body the necessary powers over the commerce of the United States."

It was immediately taken into consideration, and resolutions were passed conforming to its prayer. Similar applications were made by other commercial towns.

From these proceedings, and from the general representations made by the American merchants, General Washington had augured the most happy effects.

In a letter to the Marquis de Lafayette, he thus expressed his hope of the consequences which would attend the efforts then making to enlarge the powers of congress. "However unimportant America may be considered at present, and however Britain may affect to despise her trade, there will assuredly come a day when this country will have some weight in the scale of empires."

But a concurrence of the states in granting to the general government the beneficial powers in question, was not so near being effected as was hoped by its friends. A resolution was moved in congress, recommending it to the several states to vest in that body full authority to regulate their commerce, both external and internal, and to impose such duties as might be necessary for that purpose. This power was to be fettered with several extraordinary limitations, which might render it more acceptable to the governments who were asked to bestow it, among which was a provision that the duties should be "collectible under the authority, and accrue to the use of the state in which the same should be made payable." Notwithstanding these restrictions, marking the keen sighted jealousy with which any diminution of state sovereignty was watched, this resolution encountered much opposition even in congress.

During these transactions, the public attention was called to another subject which served to impress still more powerfully on every reflecting mind, the necessity of enlarging the powers of the general government, were it only to give efficacy to those which in theory it already possessed.

The uneasiness occasioned by the infractions of the treaty of peace on the part of Great Britain, has been already noticed. To obain its complete execution, constituted one of the objects for which Mr. Adams had been deputed to the court of St. James. A memorial presented by that minister in December, 1785, urging the complaints of America, and pressing for a full compliance with the treaty, was answered by an enumeration of the violations of that compact on the part of the United States. The Marquis of Carmarthen acknowledged explicitly the obligation created by the seventh article to withdraw the British garrisons from every post within the United States; but insisted that the obligation created by the fourth article, to remove every lawful impediment to the recovery of *bona fide* debts, was equally clear and explicit.

"The engagement entered into by a treaty ought," he said, "to be mutual, and equally binding on the respective contracting parties. It would, therefore, be the height of folly as well as injustice, to suppose one party alone obliged to a strict observance of the public faith, while the other might remain free to deviate from its own engagements as often as convenience might render such deviation necessary, though at the expense of its own credit and importance."

He concluded with the assurance, "that whenever America should manifest a real determination to fulfil her part of the treaty, Great Britain would not hesitate to prove her sincerity to co-operate in whatever points depended upon her, for carrying every article of it into real and complete effect."

This letter was accompanied by a statement of the infractions of the fourth article.

Copies of both documents were immediately transmitted by Mr. Adams to congress, by whom they were referred to Mr. Jay, the secretary for foreign affairs. The report of that upright minister did not, by contravening facts, affect to exculpate his country. "Some of the facts," said he in a letter to General Washington, written after permission to communicate the papers had been given, "are inaccurately stated and improperly coloured; but it is too true that the treaty has been violated. On such occasions, I think it better fairly to confess and correct errors, than attempt to deceive ourselves and others, by fallacious though plausible palliations and excuses.

"To oppose popular prejudices, to censure the proceedings and expose the impropriety of states, is an unpleasant task, but it must be done."[1]

That the United States might with reason be required to fulfil the treaty before they could entitle themselves to demand a strict performance of it on the part of Great Britain, was a position the propriety of which they were prevented from contesting by the miserably defective organization of the government. If their treaties were obligatory in theory, the inability of congress to enforce their execution had been demonstrated in practice. Restrained by this defect in the constitution from insisting that the evacuation of the western posts should precede the removal of the impediments to the *bona fide* execution of the treaty on the part of America, government exerted its earnest endeavours to prevail on the several states to repeal all existing laws which might be repugnant to that compact. The resolutions which were passed on that subject, and the circular letters which accompanied them to the several governors, contain arguments which ought to have demonstrated to all, the constitutional obligation of a treaty negotiated under the authority of congress, and the real policy, as well as the moral duty of faithfully executing that which had been formed with Great Britain. To the deep mortification of those who respected the character of the nation, these earnest representations did not produce the effect which was expected from them. "It was impolitic and unfortunate, if not unjust in these states," said General Washington to a member of congress by whom the objectionable conduct of America was first intimated to him, "to pass laws which by fair construction might be considered as infractions of the treaty of peace. It is good policy at all times to place one's adversary in the wrong. Had we observed good faith, and the western posts had been withheld from us by Great Britain, we might have appealed to God and man for justice."

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[1] The facts relative to this negotiation were stated in the correspondence of General Washington. The statement is supported by the Secret Journals of Congress, vol. 4, p. 329, and those which follow.

"What a misfortune it is," said he in reply to the secretary for foreign affairs, "that the British should have so well grounded a pretext for their palpable infractions, and what a disgraceful part, out of the choice of difficulties before us, are we to act!"

The discontents arising from the embarrassments in which individuals were involved, continued to increase. At length, two great parties were formed in every state, which were distinctly marked, and which pursued distinct objects, with systematic arrangement.

The one struggled with unabated zeal for the exact observance of public and private engagements. By those belonging to it, the faith of a nation, or of a private man was deemed a sacred pledge, the violation of which was equally forbidden by the principles of moral justice, and of sound policy. The distresses of individuals were, they thought, to be alleviated only by industry and frugality, not by a relaxation of the laws, or by a sacrifice of the rights of others. They were consequently the uniform friends of a regular administration of justice, and of a vigorous course of taxation which would enable the state to comply with its engagements. By a natural association of ideas, they were also, with very few exceptions, in favour of enlarging the powers of the federal government, and of enabling it to protect the dignity and character of the nation abroad, and its interests at home.

The other party marked out for themselves a more indulgent course. Viewing with extreme tenderness the case of the debtor, their efforts were unceasingly directed to his relief. To exact a faithful compliance with contracts was, in their opinion, a harsh measure which the people would not bear. They were uniformly in favour of relaxing the administration of justice, of affording facilities for the payment of debts, or of suspending their collection, and of remitting taxes. The same course of opinion led them to resist every attempt to transfer from their own hands into those of congress, powers, which by others were deemed essential to the preservation of the union. In many of these states, the party last mentioned, constituted a decided majority of the people; and in all of them, it was very powerful. The emission of paper money, the delay of legal proceedings, and the suspension of the collection of taxes, were the fruits of their rule wherever they were completely predominant. Even where they failed to carry their measures, their strength was such as to encourage the hope of succeeding in a future attempt; and annual elections held forth to them the prospect of speedily repairing the loss of a favourite question. Throughout the union, the contest between these parties was periodically revived; and the public mind was perpetually agitated with hopes and fears on subjects which essentially affected the fortunes of a considerable proportion of the society.

These contests were the more animated, because, in the state governments generally, no principle had been introduced which could resist the wild projects of the moment, give the people an opportunity to reflect, and allow the good sense of the nation time for exertion. This uncertainty with respect to measures of great importance to every member of the community, this instability in principles which ought, if possible to be rendered immutable, produced a long train of ills; and is seriously believed to have been among the operating causes of those pecuniary embarrassments, which, at that time, were so general as to influence the legislation of almost every state in the union. Its direct consequence was the loss of confidence in the government, and in individuals. This, so far as respected the government, was peculiarly discernible in the value of state debts.

The war having been conducted by nations in many respects independent of each other, the debts contracted in its prosecution were due, in part from the United States, and in part from the individual states who became immediately responsible to the creditors, retaining their claim against the government of the union for any balances which might appear to be due on a general settlement of accounts.

That the debt of the United States should have greatly depreciated will excite no surprise, when it is recollected that the government of the union possessed no funds, and, without the assent of jealous and independent sovereigns, could acquire none, to pay the accruing interest: but the depreciation of the debt due from those states which made an annual and adequate provision for the interest, can be ascribed only to a want of confidence in governments which were controlled by no fixed principles; and it is therefore not entirely unworthy of attention. In many of those states which had repelled every attempt to introduce into circulation a depreciated medium of commerce, or to defeat the annual provision of funds for the payment of the interest, the debt sunk in value to ten, five, and even less than four shillings in the pound. However unexceptionable might be the conduct of the existing legislature, the hazard from those which were to follow was too great to be encountered without an immense premium. In private transactions, an astonishing degree of distrust also prevailed. The bonds of men whose ability to pay their debts was unquestionable, could not be negotiated but at a discount of thirty, forty, and fifty *per centum:* real property was scarcely vendible; and sales of any article for ready money could be made only at a ruinous loss. The prospect of extricating the country from these embarrassments was by no means flattering. Whilst every thing else fluctuated, some of the causes which produced this calamitous state of things were permanent. The hope and fear still remained, that the debtor party would obtain the victory at the elections; and instead of making the painful effort to obtain relief by industry and economy, many rested all their hopes on legislative interference. The mass of national labour, and of national wealth, was consequently diminished. In every quarter were found those who asserted it to be impossible for the people to pay their public or private debts; and in some instances, threats were uttered of suspending the administration of justice by violence.

By the enlightened friends of republican government, this gloomy state of things was viewed with deep chagrin. Many became apprehensive that those plans from which so much happiness to the human race had been anticipated, would produce only real misery; and would maintain but a short and turbulent existence. Meanwhile, the wise and thinking part of the community, who could trace evils to their source, laboured unceasingly to inculcate opinions favourable to the incorporation of some principles into the political system, which might correct the obvious vices, without endangering the free spirit of the existing institutions.

While the advocates for union were exerting themselves to impress its necessity on the public mind, measures were taken in Virginia, which, though originating in different views, terminated in a proposition for a general convention to revise the state of the union.

To form a compact relative to the navigation of the rivers Potomac and Pocomoke, and of part of the bay of Chesapeake, commissioners were appointed by the legislatures of Virginia and Maryland, who assembled in Alexandria, in March, 1785. While at Mount Vernon on a visit, they agreed to propose to their respective governments, the appointment of other commissioners, with power to make conjoint arrangements, to which the assent of congress was to be solicited, for maintaining a naval force in the Chesapeake; and to establish a tariff of duties on imports, to which the laws of both states should conform. When these propositions received the assent of the legislature of Virginia, an additional resolution was passed, directing that which respected the duties on imports to be communicated to all the states in the union, who were invited to send deputies to the meeting.

On the 21st of January, 1786, a few days after the passage of these resolutions, another was adopted appointing certain commissioners,[1] "who were to meet such as might be appointed by the other states in the union, at a time and place to be agreed on, to take into consideration the trade of the United States; to examine the relative situation and trade of the said states; to consider how far a uniform system in their commercial relations may be necessary to their common interest, and their permanent harmony; and to report to the several states such an act relative to this great object, as, when unanimously ratified by them, will enable the United States in congress assembled effectually to provide for the same."

In the circular letter transmitting these resolutions to the respective states, Annapolis in Maryland was proposed as the place, and the ensuing September as the time of meeting.

Before the arrival of the period at which these commissioners were to assemble, the idea was carried by those who saw and deplored the complicated calamities which flowed from the inefficacy of the general government, much further than was avowed by the resolution of Virginia. "Although," said one of the most conspicuous patriots[2] of the revolution, in a letter to General Washington, dated the 16th of March, 1786, "you have wisely retired from public employments, and calmly view from the temple of fame, the various exertions of that sovereignty and independence which Providence has enabled you to be so greatly and gloriously instrumental in securing to your country, yet I am persuaded you can not view them with the eye of an unconcerned spectator.

"Experience has pointed out errors in our national government which call for correction, and which threaten to blast the fruit we expected from our tree of liberty. The convention proposed by Virginia may do some good, and would perhaps do more, if it comprehended more objects. An opinion begins to prevail that a general convention for revising the articles of confederation would be expedient. Whether the people are yet ripe for such a measure, or whether the system proposed to be attained by it is only to be expected from calamity and commotion, is difficult to ascertain.

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[1] Edmund Randolph, James Madison, Walter Jones, St. George Tucker, and Meriwether Smith.

[2] Mr. Jay.

"I think we are in a delicate situation, and a variety of considerations and circumstances give me uneasiness. It is in contemplation to take measures for forming a general convention. The plan is not matured. If it should be well connected and take effect, I am fervent in my wishes that it may comport with the line of life you have marked out for yourself, to favour your country with your councils on such an important and *single* occasion. I suggest this merely as a hint for consideration."

In the moment of tranquillity, and of real or imaginary security, the mind delights to retrace the intricate path by which this point of repose has been attained. The patriots who accomplished that great revolution which has given to the American people a national government capable of maintaining the union of the states, and of preserving republican liberty, must be gratified with the review of that arduous and doubtful struggle, which terminated in the triumph of human reason, and the establishment of that government. Even to him who was not an actor in the busy scene, who enjoys the fruits of the labour without participating in the toils or the fears of the patriots who have preceded him, the sentiments entertained by the most enlightened and virtuous of America at the eventful period between the restoration of peace and the adoption of our present free and effective constitution, can not be uninteresting.

"Our affairs," said the same gentleman in a letter of the 27th of June, "seem to lead to some crisis, some revolution—something that I can not foresee or conjecture. I am uneasy and apprehensive, more so than during the war. *Then*, we had a fixed object, and though the means and time of obtaining it were often problematical, yet I did firmly believe that we should ultimately succeed, because I did firmly believe that justice was with us. The case is now altered; we are going, and doing wrong, and therefore I look forward to evils and calamities, but without being able to guess at the instrument, nature or measure of them.

"That we shall again recover, and things again go well, I have no doubt. Such a variety of circumstances would not, almost miraculously, have combined to liberate and make us a nation, for transient and unimportant purposes. I therefore believe we are yet to become a great and respectable people—but when or how, only the spirit of prophecy can discern.

"There doubtless is much reason to think and to say that we are wofully, and, in many instances, wickedly misled. Private rage for property suppresses public considerations, and personal rather than national interests have become the great objects of attention. Representative bodies will ever be faithful copies of their originals, and generally exhibit a chequered assemblage of virtue and vice, of abilities and weakness. The mass of men are neither wise nor good, and the virtue, like the other resources of a country, can only be drawn to a point by strong circumstances, ably managed, or strong governments, ably administered. New governments have not the aid of habit and hereditary respect, and being generally the result of preceding tumult and confusion, do not immediately acquire stability or strength. Besides, in times of commotion, some men will gain confidence and importance who merit neither, and who, like political mountebanks, are less solicitous about the health of the credulous crowd, than about making the most of their nostrums and prescriptions.

"What I most fear is, that the better kind of people (by which I mean the people who are orderly and industrious, who are content with their situations, and not uneasy in their circumstances) will be led by the insecurity of property, the loss of confidence in their rules, and the want of public faith and rectitude, to consider the charms of liberty as imaginary and delusive. A state of uncertainty and fluctuation must disgust and alarm such men, and prepare their minds for almost any change that may promise them quiet and security."

To this interesting letter, General Washington made the following reply. "Your sentiments that our affairs are drawing rapidly to a crisis, accord with my own. What the event will be is also beyond the reach of my foresight. We have errors to correct; we have probably had too good an opinion of human nature in forming our confederation. Experience has taught us that men will not adopt and carry into execution measures the best calculated for their own good, without the intervention of coercive power. I do not conceive we can exist long as a nation, without lodging somewhere a power which will pervade the whole union in as energetic a manner, as the authority of the state government extends over the several states. To be fearful of investing congress, constituted as that body is, with ample authorities for national purposes, appears to me the very climax of popular absurdity and madness. Could congress exert them for the detriment of the people, without injuring themselves in an equal or greater proportion? Are not their interests inseparably connected with those of their constituents? By the rotation of appointment must they not mingle frequently with the mass of citizens? Is it not rather to be apprehended, if they were possessed of the powers before described, that the individual members would be induced to use them, on many occasions, very timidly and inefficaciously, for fear of losing their popularity and future election? We must take human nature as we find it: perfection falls not to the share of mortals. Many are of opinion that congress have too frequently made use of the suppliant humble tone of requisition in applications to the states, when they had a right to assert their imperial dignity, and command obedience. Be that as it may, requisitions are a perfect nullity, where thirteen sovereign, independent, disunited states, are in the habit of discussing, and refusing or complying with them at their option. Requisitions are actually little better than a jest and a bye-word throughout the land. If you tell the legislatures they have violated the treaty of peace, and invaded the prerogatives of the confederacy, they will laugh in your face. What then is to be done? Things can not go on in the same train for ever. It is much to be feared, as you observe, that the better kind of people, being disgusted with these circumstances, will have their minds prepared for any revolution whatever. We are apt to run from one extreme into another. To anticipate and prevent disastrous contingencies, would be the part of wisdom and patriotism.

"What astonishing changes a few years are capable of producing! I am told that even respectable characters speak of a monarchical form of government without horror. From thinking, proceeds speaking, thence to acting is often but a single step.

But how irrevocable and tremendous! what a triumph for our enemies to verify their predictions!—what a triumph for the advocates of despotism to find that we are incapable of governing ourselves, and that systems founded on the basis of equal liberty are merely ideal and fallacious! Would to God that wise measures may be taken in time to avert the consequences we have but too much reason to apprehend.

"Retired as I am from the world, I frankly acknowledge I can not feel myself an unconcerned spectator. Yet having happily assisted in bringing the ship into port, and having been fairly discharged, it is not my business to embark again on a sea of troubles.

"Nor could it be expected that my sentiments and opinions would have much weight on the minds of my countrymen.—They have been neglected, though given as a last legacy in the most solemn manner—I had then perhaps some claims to public attention.—I consider myself as having none at present."

The convention at Annapolis was attended by commissioners from only five states.[1] These, after appointing Mr. Dickinson their chairman, proceeded to discuss the objects for which they had convened. Perceiving that more ample powers would be required to effect the beneficial purposes which they contemplated, and hoping to procure a representation from a greater number of states, the convention determined to rise without coming to any specific resolutions on the particular subject which had been referred to them. Previous to their adjournment, however, they agreed on a report to be made to their respective states, in which they represented the necessity of extending the revision of the federal system to all its defects, and recommended that deputies for that purpose be appointed by the several legislatures, to meet in convention in the city of Philadelphia, on the second day of the ensuing May.

The reasons for preferring a convention to a discussion of this subject in congress were stated to be, "that in the latter body, it might be too much interrupted by the ordinary business before them, and would, besides, be deprived of the valuable counsels of sundry individuals who were disqualified by the constitution or laws of particular states, or by peculiar circumstances, from a seat in that assembly."

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[1] New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia.

A copy of this report was transmitted to congress in a letter from the chairman, stating the inefficacy of the federal government, and the necessity of devising such further provisions as would render it adequate to the exigencies of the union.

On receiving this report, the legislature of Virginia passed an act for the appointment of deputies to meet such as might be appointed by other states; to assemble in convention at Philadelphia, at the time, and for the purposes, specified in the recommendation from the convention which had met at Annapolis.

In communicating this act to General Washington, its principal advocate[1] thus intimated the intention of aiding it by the influence and character of the chief of the revolution. "It has been thought adviseable to give the subject a very solemn dress, and all the weight which could be derived from a single state. This idea will also be pursued in the selection of characters to represent Virginia in the federal convention. You will infer our earnestness on this point, from the liberty which will be used of placing your name at the head of them. How far this liberty may correspond with the ideas by which you ought to be governed, will be best decided where it must ultimately be decided. In every event it will assist powerfully in marking the zeal of our legislature, and its opinion of the magnitude of the occasion."

"Although," said the general in reply, "I have bid a public adieu to the public walks of life, and had resolved never more to tread that theatre; yet, if upon an occasion so interesting to the well being of the confederacy, it had been the wish of the assembly that I should be an associate in the business of revising the federal system, I should from a sense of the obligation I am under for repeated proofs of confidence in me, more than from any opinion I could entertain of my usefulness, have obeyed its call; but it is now out of my power to do this with any degree of consistency—the cause I will mention.

"I presume you heard, sir, that I was first appointed, and have since been rechosen president of the society of the Cincinnati; and you may have understood also, that the triennial general meeting of this body is to be held in Philadelphia the first Monday in May next. Some particular reasons combining with the peculiar situation of my private concerns, the necessity of paying attention to them, a wish for retirement and relaxation from public cares, and rheumatic pains which I begin to feel very sensibly, induced me, on the 31st ultimo, to address a circular letter to each state society, informing them of my intention not to be at the next meeting, and of my desire not to be rechosen president. The vice-president is also informed of this, that the business of the society may not be impeded by my absence. Under these circumstances, it will readily be perceived that I could not appear at the same time and place on any other occasion, without giving offence to a very respectable and deserving part of the community—the late officers of the American army."

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[1] Mr. Madison.

Notwithstanding this letter, the name of General Washington was not withdrawn, and he was unanimously chosen a member of the convention. On receiving private information of this appointment, he addressed a second letter to his confidential friend, in which he detailed more at large, the motives which induced him to decline a service, the importance of which he felt sensibly, and which he would willingly have undertaken but for the peculiar circumstances which were stated.

His name, however, was continued in the appointment. The gloomy aspect of affairs in the north rendered this the more necessary, and it was thus explained by his correspondent. "I have considered well the circumstances which it (your letter) confidentially discloses, as well as those contained in your preceding favour. The difficulties which they oppose to an acceptance of the appointment in which you are included, can as little be denied, as they can fail to be regretted. But I still am inclined to think, that the posture of our affairs, if it should continue, would prevent any criticism on the situation which the contemporary meetings would place you in; and wish that at least a door could be kept open for your acceptance hereafter, in case the gathering clouds should become so dark and menacing as to supersede every consideration but that of our national existence or safety. A suspense of your ultimate determination would be nowise inconvenient in a public view, as the executives are authorized to fill vacancies, and can fill them at any time; and in any event, three out of seven deputies are authorized to represent the state. How far it may be admissible in another view, will depend perhaps in some measure on the chance of your finally undertaking the service, but principally on the correspondence which is now passing on the subject, between yourself and the governor."

The governor of Virginia,[1] who was himself also elected to the convention, transmitted to General Washington the act, and the vote of the assembly in the following letter. "By the enclosed act you will readily discover that the assembly are alarmed at the storms which threaten the United States. What our enemies have foretold seems to be hastening to its accomplishment, and can not be frustrated but by an instantaneous, zealous, and steady union among the friends of the federal government. To you I need not press our present dangers. The inefficiency of congress you have often felt in your official character; the increasing languor of our associated republics you hourly see; and a dissolution would be, I know, to you, a source of the deepest mortification.

"I freely then entreat you to accept the unanimous appointment of the general assembly to the convention at Philadelphia. For the gloomy prospect still admits one ray of hope, that those who began, carried on, and consummated the revolution, can yet rescue America from the impending ruin."

"Sensible as I am," said the general in reply, "of the honour conferred on me by the general assembly of this commonwealth, in appointing me one of the deputies to a convention proposed to be held in the city of Philadelphia in May next, for the purpose of revising the federal constitution; and desirous as I am on all occasions of testifying a ready obedience to the calls of my country—yet, sir, there exist at this moment, circumstances which I am persuaded will render this fresh instance of confidence incompatible with other measures which I had previously adopted, and from which seeing little prospect of disengaging myself, it would be disingenuous not to express a wish that some other character, on whom greater reliance can be had, may be substituted in my place, the probability of my non-attendance being too great to continue my appointment.

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[1] Mr. Randolph.

"As no mind can be more deeply impressed than mine is with the critical situation of our affairs, resulting in a great measure from the want of efficient powers in the federal head, and due respect to its ordinances, so consequently those who do engage in the important business of removing these defects, will carry with them every good wish of mine, which the best dispositions towards their attainment can bestow."

The executive, unwilling to relinquish the advantages which the legislature had expected to derive from exhibiting the name of Washington at the head of the Virginia delegation, refused to consider him as having declined the appointment. That his judgment had not completely decided on the course which duty and patriotism required him to pursue; that in a crisis on which probably depended the union of the states, and the happiness of America, he refused himself reluctantly to the anxious wishes of his countrymen; were too apparent not to leave a hope that events might yet determine him to yield to their desires. He was therefore emphatically requested not to decide absolutely and was informed that as no inconvenience would result from not appointing a successor, the option of complying with the earnest solicitations of those who considered the effort about to be made as the last hope of the union, would, as long as possible, be permitted to remain with him. In the mean time, those who persuaded themselves that much good might result from the proposed convention, continued to urge him with delicacy but with earnestness, not to withhold on this great and particular occasion, those inestimable services which the confidence so justly reposed by the public in his talents and character, enabled him alone to render.

Placed in these circumstances, General Washington weighed deliberately in his own mind the arguments for and against accepting the appointment which was so seriously pressed upon him. That the proposed convention was, in any point of view in which it could be contemplated, an object of the first magnitude, appeared to him to be undeniable. It was apparent that the actual government could not exist much longer without additional means. It was therefore necessary to meet the solemn question whether it ought to be supported or annihilated. Those who embraced the former part of the alternative must consider the convention as the only remaining experiment from which the federal government could derive powers sufficiently ample for its preservation. Those who embraced the latter, who thought that on a full and dispassionate revision of the system, its continuance would be adjudged impracticable or unwise, could not hesitate to admit that their opinion would derive great additional weight from the sanction of so respectable a body as that which was about to assemble: and that in such an event, it was greatly desirable, and would afford some security against civil discord, to put the public in possession of a plan prepared and digested by such high authority. "I must candidly confess," he added in a letter to Colonel Humphries, "as we could not remain quiet more than three or four years in time of peace, under the constitutions of our own choosing, which were believed in many states to have been formed with deliberation and wisdom, I see little prospect either of our agreeing on any other, or that we should remain long satisfied under it, if we could. Yet I would wish any thing and every thing essayed to prevent the effusion of blood, and to avert the humiliating and contemptible figure we are about to make in the annals of mankind!"

Earnestly as General Washington wished success to the experiment about to be made, he could not surrender his objections to the step its friends urged him to take, without the most serious consideration. In addition to that which grew out of his connexion with the Cincinnati, and to the reluctance with which he could permit himself to be drawn, on any occasion, into a political station, there were others which could not be disregarded. A convention, not originating in a recommendation of congress, was deemed by many an illegitimate meeting: and as the New England states had neglected the invitation to appear by their representatives at Annapolis, there was reason to apprehend they might be equally inattentive to the request now made them to assemble at Philadelphia. To appear in a public character, for a purpose not generally deemed of the utmost importance, would not only be unpleasant to himself, but might diminish his capacity to be useful on occasions which subsequent events might produce. "If," said he in a private letter to a military friend, "this second attempt to convene the states for the purposes proposed by the report of the partial representation at Annapolis in September, should also prove abortive, it may be considered as unequivocal evidence that the states are not likely to agree on any general measure which is to pervade the union, and of course, that there is an end of federal government. The states which make this last dying essay to avoid this misfortune would be mortified at the issue and their deputies would return home chagrined at their ill success and disappointment. This would be a disagreeable circumstance to any one of them, but more particularly to a person in my situation." His letters of consultation therefore, with a few confidential friends, also requested information respecting those points on which his own judgment might ultimately be formed. He was particularly desirous of knowing how the proposition made by Virginia was received in the other states, and what measures were taken to contravene, or to give it effect. He inquired too with the utmost solicitude how the members of the Cincinnati would receive his appearance in convention, after declining to be rechosen the president of that society.

The enlightened friends of the union and of republican government, generally regarded the convention as a measure which afforded the best chance for preserving liberty and internal peace. And those whose hopes predominated over their fears, were anxious to increase the probability of deriving from it every practicable good, by retaining on the list of its members, the most conspicuous name of which America could boast. But this opinion was not universal. Among those who felt the importance of the crisis, and who earnestly wished that a free government, competent to the preservation of the union, might be established, there were some who despaired of a favourable issue to the attempt, and who were therefore anxious to rescue their general from the increased mortification which would attend its failure, should he be personally engaged in it. They believed that all the states would not be represented in the convention. In a letter of the 20th of January, 1787, Colonel Humphries, who was himself under this impression, thus accounts for the omission of the federal men in the assembly of Connecticut, to press the appointment of deputies. "The reason," he said, "was a conviction that the persons who could be elected were some of the best anti-federal men in the state, who believed, or acted as if they believed, that the powers of congress were already too unlimited, and who would wish, apparently, to see the union dissolved. These demagogues," continued the letter, "really affect to persuade the people (to use their own phraseology) that they are only in danger of having their liberties stolen away by an artful designing aristocracy. But should the convention be formed under the most favourable auspices, and should the members be unanimous in recommending, in the most forcible, the most glowing, and the most pathetic terms which language can afford, that it is indispensable to the salvation of the country, congress should be clothed with more ample powers, the states," he thought, "would not all comply with the recommendation. They have a mortal reluctance to divest themselves of the smallest attribute of independent separate sovereignties." After assigning many reasons against accepting the appointment, this gentleman added: "the result of the convention may not perhaps be so important as is expected, in which case your character would be materially affected. Other people can work up to the present scene. I know your personal influence and character is justly considered the last stake which America has to play. Should you not reserve yourself for the united call of a continent entire?

"If you should attend on this convention, and concur in recommending measures which should be generally adopted, but opposed in some parts of the union, it would doubtless be understood that you had in a degree pledged yourself for their execution. This would at once sweep you back inevitably into the tide of public affairs."

The same opinion was also intimated by another military friend[1] who had always possessed a large portion of the esteem and affection of his general. After stating the various and contradictory plans of government which were suggested by the schemers of the day, he added; "you will see by this sketch, my dear sir, how various are the opinions of men, and how difficult it will be to bring them to concur in any effective government. I am persuaded, if you were determined to attend the convention, and it should be generally known, it would induce the eastern states to send delegates to it. I should therefore be much obliged for information of your decision on this subject. At the same time, the principles of the purest and most respectful friendship induce me to say, that however strongly I wish for measures which would lead to national happiness and glory, yet I do not wish you to be concerned in any political operations, of which there are such various opinions. There may indeed arise some solemn occasion, in which you may conceive it to be your duty again to exert your utmost talents to promote the happiness of your country. But this occasion must be of an unequivocal nature, in which the enlightened and virtuous citizens should generally concur."

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[1] General Knox.

While the confidential friends of General Washington were thus divided on the part which it behooved him to act, there was much reason to fear that a full representation of the states would not be obtained. Among those who were disinclined to a convention, were persons who were actuated by different and even by opposite motives. There were probably some who believed that a higher toned[1] government than was compatible with the opinions generally prevailing among the friends of order, of real liberty, and of national character, was essential to the public safety. They believed that men would be conducted to that point only through the road of misery into which their follies would lead them and that "times must be worse before they could be better." Many had sketched in their own minds a plan of government strongly resembling that which has been actually adopted, but despaired of seeing so rational a system accepted, or even recommended; "some gentlemen," said the correspondent last mentioned, "are apprehensive that a convention of the nature proposed to meet in May next, might devise some expedient to brace up the present defective confederation, so as just to serve to keep us together, while it would prevent those exertions for a national character which are essential to our happiness: that in this point of view it might be attended with the bad effect of assisting us to creep on in our present miserable condition, without a hope of a generous constitution, that should, at the same time, shield us from the effects of faction, and of despotism."[1] Many discountenanced the convention, because the mode of calling it was deemed irregular, and some objected to it, because it was not so constituted as to give authority to the plan which should be devised. But the great mass of opposition originated in a devotion to state sovereignty, and in hostility to any considerable augmentation of federal power.

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[1] This sentiment was far from being avowed by any correspondent of General Washington, but is stated in the private letters to him, to have been taken up by some.

The ultimate decision of the states on this interesting proposition seems to have been in no inconsiderable degree influenced by the commotions which about that time agitated all New England, and particularly Massachusetts.

Those causes of discontent which existed, after the restoration of peace, in every part of the union, were particularly operative in New England. The great exertions which had been made by those states in the course of the war, had accumulated a mass of debt, the taxes for the payment of which were the more burdensome, because their fisheries had become unproductive. The restlessness produced by the uneasy situation of individuals, connected with lax notions concerning public and private faith, and erroneous opinions which confound liberty with an exemption from legal control, produced a state of things which alarmed all reflecting men, and demonstrated to many the indispensable necessity of clothing government with powers sufficiently ample for the protection of the rights of the peaceable and quiet, from the invasions of the licentious and turbulent part of the community.

This disorderly spirit was cherished by unlicensed conventions, which, after voting their own constitutionality, and assuming the name of the people, arrayed themselves against the legislature, and detailed at great length the grievances by which they alleged themselves to be oppressed. Its hostility was principally directed against the compensation promised to the officers of the army, against taxes, and against the administration of justice: and the circulation of a depreciated currency was required, as a relief from the pressure of public and private burdens which had become, it was alleged, too heavy to be borne. Against lawyers and courts, the strongest resentments were manifested; and to such a dangerous extent were these dispositions indulged, that, in many instances, tumultuous assemblages of people arrested the course of law, and restrained the judges from proceeding in the execution of their duty. The ordinary recourse to the power of the country was found an insufficient protection, and the appeals made to reason were attended with no beneficial effect. The forbearance of the government was attributed to timidity rather than to moderation, and the spirit of insurrection appeared to be organized into a regular system for the suppression of courts.

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[1] In a subsequent part of the same letter, this gentleman draws the outlines of a constitution such as he would wish. It is essentially the same with that which was recommended by the convention.

In the bosom of Washington, these tumults excited attention and alarm. "For God's sake tell me," said he in a letter to Colonel Humphries, "what is the cause of all these commotions? Do they proceed from licentiousness, British influence disseminated by the tories, or real grievances which admit of redress? if the latter, why was redress delayed until the public mind had become so much agitated? if the former, why are not the powers of government tried at once? It is as well to be without, as not to exercise them. Commotions of this sort, like snowballs, gather strength as they roll, if there is no opposition in the way to divide and crumble them."

"As to your question, my dear general," said Colonel Humphries in reply, "respecting the cause and origin of these commotions, I hardly find myself in condition to give a certain answer. If from all the information I have been able to obtain, I might be authorised to hazard an opinion, I should attribute them to all the three causes which you have suggested. In Massachusetts particularly, I believe there are a few real grievances; and also some wicked agents or emissaries who have been busy in magnifying the positive evils, and fomenting causeless jealousies and disturbances. But it rather appears to me, that there is a licentious spirit prevailing among many of the people; a levelling principle; a desire of change; and a wish to annihilate all debts, public and private." "It is indeed a fact," said General Knox, after returning from a visit to the eastern country, "that high taxes are the ostensible cause of the commotion, but that they are the real cause, is as far remote from truth, as light is from darkness. The people who are the insurgents have never paid any, or but very little taxes. But they see the weakness of government. They feel at once their own poverty compared with the opulent, and their own force; and they are determined to make use of the latter, in order to remedy the former. Their creed is, that the property of the United States has been protected from confiscation by the joint exertions of all, and therefore ought to be common to all. And he that attempts opposition to this creed is an enemy to equity and justice, and ought to be swept from the face of the earth."

The force of this party throughout New England was computed by General Knox at twelve or fifteen thousand men. "They were chiefly," he said, "of the young and active part of the community, who were more easily collected than kept together. Desperate and unprincipled, they would probably commit overt acts of treason which would compel them, for their own safety, to embody and submit to discipline. Thus would there be a formidable rebellion against reason, the principle of all government, and the very name of liberty. This dreadful situation," he added, "has alarmed every man of principle and property in New England. They start as from a dream, and ask—what has been the cause of our delusion? What is to afford us security against the violence of lawless men? Our government must be braced, changed, or altered, to secure our lives and our property. We imagined that the mildness of the government, and the virtue of the people were so correspondent, that we were not as other nations, requiring brutal force to support the laws. But we find that we are men, actual men, possessing all the turbulent passions belonging to that animal; and that we must have a government proper and adequate for him. Men of reflection and principle are determined to endeavour to establish a government which shall have the power to protect them in their lawful pursuits, and which will be efficient in case of internal commotions, or foreign invasions. They mean that liberty shall be the basis, a liberty resulting from the equal and firm administration of the laws."

Deeply affected by these commotions, General Washington continued his anxious inquiries respecting the course they threatened to take. "I feel, my dear General Knox," said he, in answer to the letter from which the foregoing extracts are taken, infinitely more than I can express to you, for the disorders which have arisen in these states. Good God! who besides a tory could have foreseen, or a Briton have predicted them? I do assure you that even at this moment, when I reflect upon the present aspect of our affairs, it seems to me like the vision of a dream. My mind can scarcely realize it as a thing in actual existence:—so strange, so wonderful does it appear to me. In this, as in most other matters, we are too slow. When this spirit first dawned, it might probably have been easily checked; but it is scarcely within the reach of human ken, at this moment, to say when, where, or how it will terminate. There are combustibles in every state, to which a spark might set fire.

"In bewailing, which I have often done with the keenest sorrow, the death of our much lamented friend General Greene,[1] I have accompanied my regrets of late with a query, whether he would not have preferred such an exit to the scenes which it is more than probable, many of his compatriots may live to bemoan."

Ostensibly, on account of the danger which threatened the frontiers, but, really, with a view to the situation of Massachusetts, congress had agreed to augment the military establishment to a legionary corps of two thousand and forty men, and had detached the secretary of war, General Knox, to that state, with directions to concert measures with its government for the safety of the arsenal at Springfield. So inauspicious was the aspect of affairs, as to inspire serious fears that the torch of civil discord, about to be lighted up in Massachusetts, would communicate its flame to all New England, and perhaps to the union. Colonel Lee, a member of congress, drew the following picture of the condition of the eastern country at that time. "General Knox has just returned, and his report, grounded on his own knowledge, is replete with melancholy information. A majority of the people of Massachusetts are in opposition to the government. Some of the leaders avow the subversion of it to be their object, together with the abolition of debts, the division of property, and a reunion with Great Britain. In all the eastern states, same temper prevails more or less, and will certainly break forth when ever the opportune moment may arrive. The malcontents are in close connexion with Vermont, and that district, it is believed, is in negotiation with the government of Canada. In one word, my dear general, we are all in dire apprehension that a beginning of anarchy with all its calamities is made, and we have no means to stop the dreadful work. Knowing your unbounded influence, and believing that your appearance among the seditious might bring them back to peace and reconciliation, individuals suggest the propriety of an invitation to you from congress to pay us a visit. This is only a surmise, and I take the liberty to mention it to you, that, should the conjuncture of affairs induce congress to make this request, you may have some previous time for reflection on it."

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[1] This valuable officer died in Georgia in the year 1786.

"The picture which you have exhibited," replied the general, "and the accounts which are published of the commotions and temper of numerous bodies in the eastern country, present a state of things equally to be lamented and deprecated. They exhibit a melancholy verification of what our transatlantic foes have predicted; and of another thing perhaps which is still more to be regretted, and is yet more unaccountable—that mankind when left to themselves are unfit for their own government. I am mortified beyond expression when I view the clouds which have spread over the brightest morn that ever dawned upon any country. In a word, I am lost in amazement when I behold what intrigue, the interested views of desperate characters, ignorance and jealousy of the minor part, are capable of effecting as a scourge on the major part of our fellow citizens of the union; for it is hardly to be supposed that the great body of the people, though they will not act, can be so short sighted or enveloped in darkness, as not to see the rays of a distant sun through all this mist of intoxication and folly.

"You talk, my good sir, of employing influence to appease the present tumults in Massachusetts. I know not where that influence is to be found; nor if attainable, that it would be a proper remedy for these disorders. *Influence* is not *government.*

Let us have a *government,* by which our lives, liberties, and properties will be secured; or let us know the worst at once. Under these impressions, my humble opinion is, that there is a call for decision. Know precisely what the insurgents aim at. If they have *real* grievances, redress them if possible; or acknowledge the justice of them, and your inability to do it in the present moment. If they have not, employ the force of the government against them at once. If this is inadequate, *all* will be convinced that the superstructure is bad, or wants support. To be more exposed in the eyes of the world, and more contemptible than we already are, is hardly possible. To delay one or the other of these expedients, is to exasperate on the one hand, or to give confidence on the other, and will add to their numbers; for like snow-balls, such bodies increase by every movement, unless there is something in the way to obstruct and crumble them before their weight is too great and irresistible.

"These are my sentiments. Precedents are dangerous things. Let the reins of government then be braced, and held with a steady hand; and every violation of the constitution be reprehended. If defective, let it be amended, but not suffered to be trampled upon while it has an existence."

In a letter written about the same period, Colonel Humphries, after stating his apprehensions that the insurgents would seize the continental magazine at Springfield, proceeded to add; "a general failure to comply with the requisitions of congress for money, seems to prognosticate that we are rapidly advancing to a crisis. The wheels of the great political machine can scarcely continue to move much longer, under their present embarrassment. Congress, I am told, are seriously alarmed, and hardly know which way to turn, or what to expect. Indeed, my dear general, nothing but a good Providence can extricate us from our present difficulties, and prevent some terrible conclusion.

"In case of civil discord I have already told you it was seriously my opinion that you could not remain neuter; and that you would be obliged in self defence, to take part on one side or the other, or withdraw from the continent. Your friends are of the same opinion; and I believe you are convinced that it is impossible to have more disinterested or zealous friends than those who have been about your person."

"It is," said the general in reply, "with the deepest and most heart felt concern, I perceive by some late paragraphs extracted from the Boston papers, that the insurgents of Massachusetts, far from being satisfied with the redress offered by their general court, are still acting in open violation of law and government, and have obliged the chief magistrate, in a decided tone, to call upon the militia of the state to support the constitution. What, gracious God, is man! that there should be such inconsistency and perfidiousness in his conduct. It is but the other day that we were shedding our blood to obtain the constitutions under which we now live—constitutions of our own choice and making—and now, we are unsheathing the sword to overturn them. The thing is so unaccountable, that I hardly know how to realise it; or to persuade myself that I am not under the illusion of a dream.

"My mind, previous to the receipt of your letter of the first ultimo, had often been agitated by a thought similar to the one you expressed respecting an old friend of yours: but heaven forbid that a crisis should come when he shall be driven to the necessity of making a choice of either of the alternatives there mentioned."

Finding that the lenient measures which had been taken by the legislature to reclaim the insurgents, only enlarged their demands; and that they were proceeding systematically to organise a military force for the subversion of the constitution; Governor Bowdoin determined, with the advice of council, on a vigorous exertion of all the powers he possessed, for the protection and defence of the commonwealth. Upwards of four thousand militia were ordered into service, and were placed under the command of the veteran General Lincoln. "His military reputation," says Mr. Minot, "and mildness of temper, rendered him doubly capacitated for so delicate and important a trust." But the public treasury did not afford the means of keeping this force in the field a single week; and, the legislature not being in session, the government was incapable of putting the troops in motion. This difficulty was removed by individual patriotism. From the commencement of the commotions, the citizens of Boston had manifested, unequivocally, their fidelity to the constitution. On this occasion, a number of gentlemen, preceded by the governor, subscribed, in a few hours, a sufficient sum to carry on the proposed expedition.

In the depth of winter, the troops from the eastern part of the state assembled near Boston, and marched towards the scene of action. Those from the western counties met in arms under General Shepard, and took possession of the arsenal at Springfield. Before the arrival of Lincoln, a party of the insurgents attempted to dislodge Shepard, but were repulsed with some loss. Not being pursued by that officer, who could not venture to weaken his post by detachments, they continued embodied, but did not venture again to undertake offensive operations.

Urging his march with the utmost celerity, Lincoln soon came up; and, pressing the insurgent army, endeavoured by a succession of rapid movements, in which the ardour of his troops triumphed over the severity of the season, to disperse or bring it to action. Their generals retreated from post to post with a rapidity which for some time eluded his designs; and, rejecting every proposition to lay down their arms, used all their address to produce a suspension of hostilities until an accommodation might be negotiated with the legislature. "Applications were also made," says General Lincoln, "by committees and select men of the several towns in the counties of Worcester and Hampshire, praying that the effusion of blood might be avoided, while the real design of these applications was supposed to be, to stay our operations until a new court should be elected. They had no doubt, if they could keep up their influence until another choice of the legislature and of the executive, that matters might be moulded in general court to their wishes. To avoid this, was the duty of government." In answer to these applications, Lincoln exhorted those towns who sincerely wished to put an end to the rebellion without the effusion of blood, "to recall their men now in arms, and to aid in apprehending all abettors of those who should persist in their treason, and all who should yield them any comfort or supplies."

The army of government continued to brave the rigours of the climate and to press the insurgents without intermission. At length, with the loss of a few killed, and several prisoners, the rebels were dispersed, their leaders driven out of the state, and this formidable and wicked rebellion was quelled.

The same love of country which had supported the officers and soldiers of the late army through a perilous war, still glowed in their bosoms; and the patriot veterans of the revolution, uninfected by the wide spreading contagion of the times, arranged themselves almost universally under the banners of the constitution and of the laws. This circumstance lessened the prejudices which had been excited against them as creditors of the public, and diminished the odium which, in the eastern states, especially, had been directed against the order of the Cincinnati. But the most important effect of this unprovoked rebellion was, a deep conviction of the necessity of enlarging the powers of the general government; and the consequent direction of the public mind towards the convention which was to assemble at Philadelphia.

In producing this effect, a resolution of congress had also considerable influence. New York had given her final *veto* to the impost system, and in doing so, had virtually decreed the dissolution of the existing government. The confederation was apparently expiring from mere debility. The last hope of its friends having been destroyed, the vital necessity of some measure which might prevent the separation of the integral parts of which the American empire was composed, became apparent even to those who had been unwilling to perceive it; and congress was restrained from giving its sanction to the proposed convention, only by an apprehension that their taking an interest in the measure would impede rather than promote it. From this embarrassment, the members of that body were relieved by the legislature of New York. A vote of that state, which passed in the senate by a majority of only one voice, instructed its delegation to move in congress, a resolution, recommending to the several states, to appoint deputies to meet in convention, for the purpose of revising and proposing amendments to the federal constitution. On the 21st of February, 1787, the day succeeding the instructions given by New York, the subject, which had been for some time under consideration, was finally acted upon: and it was declared, "in the opinion of congress, to be expedient that, on the second Monday in May next, a convention of delegates, who shall have been appointed by the several states, be held at Philadelphia, for the sole and express purpose of revising the articles of confederation, and reporting to congress and the several legislatures, such alterations and provisions therein, as shall, when agreed to in congress, and confirmed by the states, render the federal constitution adequate to the exigencies of government, and the preservation of the union."

This recommendation removed all objections to the regularity of the convention; and co-operated with the impressions made by the licentious and turbulent spirit which had lately endangered the peace and liberty of New England, to incline those states to favour the measure. By giving the proposed meeting a constitutional sanction, and by postponing it to a day subsequent to that on which the Cincinnati were to assemble, it also removed one impediment, and diminished another, to the attendance of General Washington as a member. He persuaded himself that by repairing to Philadelphia previous to the second Monday in May, in order to attend the general meeting of the Cincinnati, he should efface any impressions unfavourable to the attachment he felt to his military friends, which might otherwise be excited in their bosoms by his appearing in a public character, after declining the presidency of their society. The increasing probability that the convention would be attended by a full representation of the states, and would propose a scheme of government which, if accepted, might conduce to the public happiness, and would not be unworthy of his character, had also its influence on his mind. An opinion too began to prevail, that the government must be invigorated by agreement or by force, and that a part of the opposition to the convention originated in a desire to establish a system of greater energy than could spring from consent. The idea that his refusing his aid in the present crisis might be attributed to a dereliction of republican principles, furnished additional motives for yielding to the wishes of his fellow citizens. On the 28th of March, he addressed a letter to the governor of Virginia, in which, after stating the reason which had induced him to decline attending the convention, the influence of which he still felt, he added—"However, as my friends, with a degree of solicitude which is unusual, seem to wish for my attendance on this occasion, I have come to a resolution to go if my health will permit, provided from the lapse of time between your excellency's letter and this reply, the executive may not (the reverse of which would be highly pleasing to me) have turned their thoughts to some other character."

After communicating this determination to the executive of Virginia, he received a letter from the secretary of war, one of the small number of his friends who had endeavoured to dissuade him from the resolution he had ultimately taken, in which that officer avowed an entire change of opinion on this subject. "It is," said he, "the general wish that you should attend. It is conceived to be highly important to the success of the propositions which may be made by the convention.

"The mass of the people feel the inconvenience of the present government, and ardently wish for such alterations as would remedy them. These must be effected by reason and by agreement, or by force. The convention appears to be the only mean by which to effect them peaceably. If it should not be attended by a proper weight of wisdom and character to carry into execution its propositions, we are to look to events, and to force, for a remedy. Were you not then to attend the convention, slander and malice might suggest that force would be the most agreeable mode of reform to you. When civil commotion rages, no purity of character, no services, however exalted, can afford a secure shield from the shafts of calumny.

"On the other hand, the unbounded confidence the people have in your tried patriotism and wisdom, would exceedingly facilitate the adoption of any important alterations that might be proposed by a convention of which you were a member, and (as I before hinted) the president."

At the time and place appointed, the representatives of twelve states convened. In Rhode Island alone a spirit sufficiently hostile to every species of reform was found, to prevent the election of deputies on an occasion so generally deemed momentous. Having unanimously chosen General Washington for their president, the convention proceeded, with closed doors, to discuss the interesting and extensive subject submitted to their consideration.

On the great principles which should constitute the basis of their system, not much contrariety of opinion is understood to have prevailed. But on the various and intricate modifications of those principles, an equal degree of harmony was not to be expected. More than once, there was reason to fear that the rich harvest of national felicity, which had been anticipated from the ample stock of worth collected in convention, would all be blasted by the rising of that body without effecting the object for which it was formed. At length the high importance attached to union triumphed over local interests; and, on the 17th of September, that constitution which has been alike the theme of panegyric and invective, was presented to the American public.

The instrument with its accompanying resolutions was by the unanimous order of the convention, transmitted to congress in a letter subscribed by the president, in which it was said to be, "the result of a spirit of amity, and of that mutual deference and concession, which the peculiarity of their political situation rendered indispensable.

"That it will meet the full and entire approbation of every state," continued the letter, "is not, perhaps to be expected; but each will doubtless consider, that had her interests been alone consulted, the consequences might have been particularly disagreeable or injurious to others. That it is liable to as few exceptions as could reasonably have been expected, we hope and believe; that it may promote the lasting welfare of that country so dear to us all, and secure her freedom and happiness, is our most ardent wish."

Congress resolved unanimously, that the report with the letter accompanying it be transmitted to the several legislatures, in order to be submitted to a convention of delegates chosen in each state by the people thereof.

Neither the intrinsic merits of the constitution nor the imposing weight of character by which it was supported, gave assurance to its friends that it would be ultimately adopted. A comparison of the views and interests by which a powerful party was actuated, with particular provisions in the constitution which were especially designed to counteract those views and interests, prepared them to expect a mass of zealous and active opposition against which the powers of reason would be in vain directed, because the real motives in which it originated would not be avowed. There were also many individuals, possessing great influence and respectable talents, who, from judgment, or from particular causes, seemed desirous of retaining the sovereignty of the states unimpaired, and of reducing the union to an alliance between independent nations. To these descriptions of persons, joined by those who supposed that an opposition of interests existed between different parts of the continent, was added a numerous class of honest men, many of whom possessed no inconsiderable share of intelligence, who could identify themselves perfectly with the state government, but who considered the government of the United States as in some respects foreign. The representation of their particular state not composing a majority of the national legislature, they could not consider that body as safely representing the people, and were disposed to measure out power to it with the same sparing hand with which they would confer it on persons not chosen by themselves, not accountable to them for its exercise, nor having any common interest with them. That power might be abused, was, to persons of this opinion, a conclusive argument against its being bestowed; and they seemed firmly persuaded that the cradle of the constitution would be the grave of republican liberty. The friends and the enemies of that instrument were stimulated to exertion by motives equally powerful; and, during the interval between its publication and adoption, every faculty of the mind was strained to secure its reception or rejection. The press teemed with the productions of temperate reason, of genius, and of passion; and it was apparent that each party believed power, sovereignty, liberty, peace, and security;—things most dear to the human heart;—to be staked on the question depending before the public. From that oblivion which is the common destiny of fugitive pieces, treating on subjects which agitate only for the moment, was rescued, by its peculiar merit, a series of essays which first appeared in the papers of New York. To expose the real circumstances of America, and the dangers which hung over the republic; to detect the numerous misrepresentations of the constitution; to refute the arguments of its opponents; and to confirm, and increase, its friends, by a full and able development of its principles; three gentlemen,[1] distinguished for their political experience, their talents, and their love of union, gave to the public a series of numbers which, collected in two volumes under the title of the FEDERALIST, will be read and admired when the controversy in which that valuable treatise on government originated, shall be no longer remembered.

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[1] Colonel Hamilton, Mr. Madison, and Mr. Jay.

To decide the interesting question which agitated a continent, the best talents of the several states were assembled in their respective conventions. So balanced were parties in some of them, that, even after the subject had been discussed for a considerable time, the fate of the constitution could scarcely be conjectured; and so small, in many instances, was the majority in its favour, as to afford strong ground for the opinion that, had the influence of character been removed, the intrinsic merits of the instrument would not have secured its adoption. Indeed, it is scarcely to be doubted that, in some of the adopting states, a majority of the people were in the opposition. In all of them, the numerous amendments which were proposed, demonstrate the reluctance with which the new government was accepted; and that a dread of dismemberment, not an approbation of the particular system under consideration, had induced an acquiescence in it. The interesting nature of the question, the equality of the parties, the animation produced inevitably by ardent debate, had a necessary tendency to embitter the dispositions of the vanquished, and to fix more deeply, in many bosoms, their prejudices against a plan of government, in opposition to which all their passions were enlisted.

At length, the conventions of eleven states[1] assented to and ratified the constitution; and the preparatory measures were taken for bringing it into operation.

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[1] North Carolina and Rhode Island did not at first accept the constitution, and New York was apparently dragged into it by a repugnance to being excluded from the confederacy. By the convention of that state a circular letter was addressed to the several states in the union inviting them to unite in calling a general convention to revise the constitution. Its friends seem to have been persuaded that this measure, if successful, would effectually destroy the edifice they had erected with so much labour, before an experience of its advantages could dissipate the prejudices which had been excited against it. "You will have seen," said one of its most effective advocates, "the circular letter from the convention of this state. It has a most pernicious tendency. If an early general convention can not be parried, it is seriously to be feared that the system which has resisted so many direct attacks, may be at length successfully undermined by its enemies. It is now perhaps to be wished that Rhode Island may not accede until this new crisis of danger be over; some think it would be better if even New York had held out until the operation of the government could have dissipated the fears which artifice had created, and the attempts resulting from those fears and artifices."

From the moment the public was possessed of this new arrangement of their political system, the attention of all was directed to General Washington as the first President of the United States. He alone was believed to fill so pre-eminent a station in the public opinion, that he might be placed at the head of the nation without exciting envy; and he alone possessed the confidence of the people in so unlimited a degree that under his auspices, the friends of the government might hope to see it introduced with a degree of firmness which would enable it to resist the open assaults, and secret plots of its numerous adversaries. By all who knew him, fears were entertained that his preference for private life would prevail over the wishes of the public; and, soon after the adoption of the constitution was ascertained, his correspondents began to press him on a point which was believed essential to the completion of the great work on which the grandeur and happiness of America was supposed to depend. "We can not," said Mr. Johnson, a gentleman of great political eminence in Maryland, "do without you, and I, and thousands more can explain to any body but yourself, why we can not do without you." "I have ever thought," said Mr. Gouverneur Morris, a gentleman who had been among the most valuable members of congress through great part of the war, and who had performed a most splendid part in the general convention, "and have ever said that you must be president; no other man can fill that office. No other man can draw forth the abilities of our country into the various departments of civil life. You alone can awe the insolence of opposing factions, and the greater insolence of assuming adherents. I say nothing of foreign powers, nor of their ministers. With these last you will have some plague. As to your feelings on this occasion, they are, I know both deep and affecting; you embark property most precious on a most tempestuous ocean: for, as you possess the highest reputation, so you expose it to the perilous chance of popular opinion. On the other hand, you will, I firmly expect, enjoy the inexpressible felicity of contributing to the happiness of all your countrymen. You will become the father of more than three millions of children; and while your bosom glows with parental tenderness, in theirs, or at least in a majority of them, you will excite the duteous sentiments of filial affection. This, I repeat it, is what I firmly expect; and my views are not directed by that enthusiasm which your public character has impressed on the public mind. Enthusiasm is generally short sighted and too often blind. I form my conclusions from those talents and virtues which the world *believes,* and which your friends *know* you possess."

To those who attribute human action in every case to the motives which most usually guide the human mind, it will appear scarcely possible that the supreme magistracy could possess no charms for a man long accustomed to command others; and that ambition had no share in tempting the hero of the American revolution to tread once more the paths of public life. Yet, if his communications to friends to whom he unbosomed the inmost sentiments of his soul be inspected, it will be difficult to resist the conviction that the struggle produced by the occasion was unaffected, and that, in accepting the presidency of the United States, no private passion was gratified; but a decided preference for private life yielded to a sense of duty, and a deep conviction of his obligations to his country.

As this is an important æra in the life of Washington, and the motives by which he was actuated will assist in developing his real character, the American reader, at least, will be gratified at seeing copious extracts from his correspondence on this interesting occasion.

In a letter detailing those arrangements which were making for the introduction of the new government, Colonel Lee proceeded thus to speak of the presidency of the United States. "The solemnity of the moment, and its application to yourself, have fixed my mind in contemplations of a public and a personal nature, and I feel an involuntary impulse which I can not resist, to communicate without reserve to you some of the reflections which the hour has produced. Solicitous for our common happiness as a people, and convicted as I continue to be that our peace and prosperity depend on the proper improvement of the present period, my anxiety is extreme that the new government may have an auspicious beginning. To effect this, and to perpetuate a nation formed under your auspices, it is certain that again you will be called forth.

"The same principles of devotion to the good of mankind, which have invariably governed your conduct, will no doubt continue to rule your mind, however opposite their consequences may be to your repose and happiness. It may be wrong, but I can not suppress, in my wishes for national felicity, a due regard for your personal fame and content.

"If the same success should attend your efforts on this important occasion which has distinguished you hitherto, then, to be sure, you will have spent a life which Providence rarely if ever before gave to the lot of one man. It is my anxious hope, it is my belief, that this will be the case; but all things are uncertain, and perhaps nothing more so than political events." He then proceeded to state his apprehensions, that the government might sink under the active hostility of its foes, and in particular, the fears which he entertained from the circular letter of New York, around which the minorities in the several states might be expected to rally.

To counteract its baneful influence with the legislature of Virginia, he expressed his earnest wish, that Mr. Madison might be prevailed on to take a seat in that assembly, and then added,

"It would certainly be unpleasant to you, and obnoxious to all who feel for your just fame, to see you at the head of a trembling system. It is a sacrifice on your part unjustifiable in any point of view. But on the other hand no alternative seems to be presented.

"Without you, the government can have but little chance of success; and the people, of that happiness which its prosperity must yield."

In reply to this letter General Washington said "your observations on the solemnity of the crisis, and its application to myself, bring before me subjects of the most momentous and interesting nature. In our endeavours to establish a new general government, the contest, nationally considered, seems not to have been so much for glory, as existence. It was for a long time doubtful whether we were to survive as an independent republic, or decline from our federal dignity into insignificant and wretched fragments of empire. The adoption of the constitution so extensively, and with so liberal an acquiescence on the part of the minorities in general, promised the former; but lately, the circular letter of New York has manifested, in my apprehension, an unfavourable, if not an insidious tendency to a contrary policy. I still hope for the best, but before you mentioned it, I could not help fearing it would serve as a standard to which the disaffected might resort. It is now evidently the part of all honest men, who are friends to the new constitution, to endeavour to give it a chance to disclose its merits and defects, by carrying it fairly into effect, in the first instance.

"The principal topic of your letter, is to me a point of great delicacy indeed;—insomuch that I can scarcely, without some impropriety, touch upon it. In the first place, the event to which you allude may never happen, among other reasons, because, if the partiality of my fellow citizens conceive it to be a mean by which the sinews of the new government would be strengthened, it will of consequence be obnoxious to those who are in opposition to it, many of whom, unquestionably, will be placed among the electors.

"This consideration alone would supersede the expediency of announcing any definitive and irrevocable resolution. You are among the small number of those who know my invincible attachment to domestic life, and that my sincerest wish is to continue in the enjoyment of it solely, until my final hour. But the world would be neither so well instructed, nor so candidly disposed, as to believe me to be uninfluenced by sinister motives, in case any circumstance should render a deviation from the line of conduct I had prescribed for myself indispensable. Should the contingency you suggest take place, and (for argument sake alone, let me say) should my unfeigned reluctance to accept the office be overcome by a deference for the reasons and opinions of my friends; might I not, after the declarations I have made, (and heaven knows they were made in the sincerity of my heart,) in the judgment of the impartial world, and of posterity, be chargeable with levity and inconsistency, if not with rashness and ambition? Nay, farther, would there not even be some apparent foundation for the two former charges? Now, justice to myself, and tranquillity of conscience require that I should act a part, if not above imputation, at least capable of vindication. Nor will you conceive me to be too solicitous for reputation. Though I prize as I ought the good opinion of my fellow citizens, yet, if I know myself, I would not seek or retain popularity at the expense of one social duty, or moral virtue. While doing what my conscience informed me was right, as it respected my God, my country, and myself, I could despise all the party clamour and unjust censure which must be expected from some, whose personal enmity might be occasioned by their hostility to the government. I am conscious, that I fear alone to give any real occasion for obloquy, and that I do not dread to meet with unmerited reproach. And certain I am, whensoever I shall be convinced the good of my country requires my reputation to be put in risque, regard for my own fame will not come in competition with an object of so much magnitude.

"If I declined the task, it would be upon quite another principle. Notwithstanding my advanced season of life, my increasing fondness for agricultural amusements, and my growing love of retirement, augment and confirm my decided predilection for the character of a private citizen, yet it will be no one of these motives, nor the hazard to which my former reputation might be exposed, or the terror of encountering new fatigues and troubles, that would deter me from an acceptance;—but a belief that some other person, who had less pretence and less inclination to be excused, could execute all the duties full as satisfactorily as myself. To say more would be indiscreet; as a disclosure of a refusal beforehand might incur the application of the fable, in which the fox is represented as undervaluing the grapes he could not reach. You will perceive, my dear sir, by what is here observed (and which you will be pleased to consider in the light of a confidential communication) that my inclinations will dispose and decide me to remain as I am, unless a clear and insurmountable conviction should be impressed on my mind, that some very disagreeable consequences must in all human probability result from the indulgence of my wishes."

About the same time, Colonel Hamilton concluded a letter on miscellaneous subjects with the following observations. "I take it for granted, sir, you have concluded to comply with what will, no doubt, be the general call of your country in relation to the new government. You will permit me to say that it is indispensable you should lend yourself to its first operations. It is to little purpose to have introduced a system, if the weightiest influence is not given to its firm establishment in the outset."

"On the delicate subject," said General Washington in reply, "with which you conclude your letter, I can say nothing; because the event alluded to may never happen; and because in case it should occur, it would be a point of prudence to defer forming one's ultimate and irrevocable decision, so long as new data might be afforded for one to act with the greatest wisdom and propriety. I would not wish to conceal my prevailing sentiment from you. For you know me well enough, my good sir, to be persuaded that I am not guilty of affectation, when I tell you it is my great and sole desire to live and die in peace and retirement on my own farm. Were it even indispensable a different line of conduct should be adopted, while you and some others who are acquainted with my heart would *acquit,* the world and posterity might probably *accuse* me of *inconsistency* and *ambition.* Still I hope, I shall always possess firmness and virtue enough to maintain (what I consider the most enviable of all titles) the character of *an honest man.*"

This answer drew from Colonel Hamilton the following reply. "I should be deeply pained, my dear sir, if your scruples in regard to a certain station should be matured into a resolution to decline it; though I am neither surprised at their existence, nor can I but agree in opinion that the caution you observe in deferring the ultimate determination is prudent. I have, however, reflected maturely on the subject, and have come to a conclusion (in which I feel no hesitation) that every public and personal consideration will demand from you an acquiescence in what will *certainly* be the unanimous wish of your country.

"The absolute retreat which you meditated at the close of the late war was natural and proper. Had the government produced by the revolution gone on in a *tolerable* train, it would have been most adviseable to have persisted in that retreat. But I am clearly of opinion that the crisis which brought you again into public view left you no alternative but to comply; and I am equally clear in the opinion that you are by that act *pledged* to take a part in the execution of the government. I am not less convinced that the impression of the necessity of your filling the station in question is so universal, that you run no risk of any uncandid imputation by submitting to it. But even if this were not the case, a regard to your own reputation, as well as to the public good, calls upon you in the strongest manner to run that risk.

"It can not be considered as a compliment to say, that on your acceptance of the office of president, the success of the new government in its commencement may materially depend. Your agency and influence will be not less important in preserving it from the future attacks of its enemies, than they have been in recommending it in the first instance to the adoption of the people. Independent of all considerations drawn from this source, the point of light in which you stand at home and abroad, will make an infinite difference in the respectability with which the government will begin its operations, in the alternative of your being or not being at the head of it. I forbear to mention considerations which might have a more personal application. What I have said will suffice for the inferences I mean to draw.

"First. In a matter so essential to the well being of society as the prosperity of a newly instituted government, a citizen of so much consequence as yourself to its success, has no option but to lend his services if called for. Permit me to say, it would be inglorious, in such a situation, not to hazard the glory, however great, which he might have previously acquired.

"Secondly. Your signature to the proposed system, pledges your judgment for its being such an one as upon the whole was worthy of the public approbation. If it should miscarry, (as men commonly decide from success or the want of it) the blame will in all probability be laid on the system itself. And the framers of it will have to encounter the disrepute of having brought about a revolution in government, without substituting any thing that was worthy of the effort; they pulled down one utopid, it will be said, to build up another. This view of the subject, if I mistake not, my dear sir, will suggest to your mind greater hazard to that fame, which must be, and ought to be dear to you, in refusing your future aid to the system, than in affording it. I will only add, that in my estimate of the matter, that aid is indispensable.

"I have taken the liberty to express these sentiments, and to lay before you my view of the subject. I doubt not the considerations mentioned have fully occurred to you, and I trust, they will finally produce in your mind the same result which exists in mine. I flatter myself the frankness with which I have delivered myself, will not be displeasing to you. It has been prompted by motives which you would not disapprove."

In answer to this letter General Washington opened himself without reserve. "In acknowledging," said he, "the receipt of your candid and kind letter by the last post, little more is incumbent on me than to thank you sincerely for the frankness with which you communicated your sentiments, and to assure you that the same manly tone of intercourse will always be more than barely welcome,—indeed it will be highly acceptable to me.

"I am particularly glad, in the present instance, that you have dealt thus freely and like a friend. Although I could not help observing from several publications and letters that my name had been sometimes spoken of, and that it was possible the *contingency* which is the subject of your letter might happen, yet I thought it best to maintain a guarded silence, and to lack the counsel of my best friends (which I certainly hold in the highest estimation) rather than to hazard an imputation unfriendly to the delicacy of my feelings. For, situated as I am, I could hardly bring the question into the slightest discussion, or ask an opinion even in the most confidential manner, without betraying, in my judgment, some impropriety of conduct, or without feeling an apprehension that a premature display of anxiety, might be construed into a vain glorious desire of pushing myself into notice as a candidate. Now if I am not grossly deceived in myself, I should unfeignedly rejoice, in case the electors, by giving their votes in favour of some other person, would save me from the dreadful dilemma of being forced to accept or refuse. If that may not be, I am in the next place, earnestly desirous of searching out the truth, and of knowing whether there does not exist a probability that the government would be just as happily and effectually carried into execution without my aid, as with it. I am *truly* solicitous to obtain all the previous information which the circumstances will afford, and to determine (when the determination can with propriety be no longer postponed) according to the principles of right reason, and the dictates of a clear conscience; without too great a reference to the unforeseen consequences which may affect my person or reputation. Until that period, I may fairly hold myself open to conviction, though I allow your sentiments to have weight in them; and I shall not pass by your arguments without giving them as dispassionate a consideration as I can possibly bestow upon them.

"In taking a survey of the subject, in whatever point of light I have been able to place it, I will not suppress the acknowledgment, my dear sir, that I have always felt a kind of gloom upon my mind, as often as I have been taught to expect I might, and perhaps must ere long be called to make a decision. You will, I am well assured, believe the assertion (though I have little expectation it would gain credit from those who are less acquainted with me) that if I should receive the appointment, and should be prevailed upon to accept it; the acceptance would be attended with more diffidence and reluctance, than ever I experienced before in my life. It would be, however, with a fixed and sole determination of lending whatever assistance might be in my power to promote the public weal, in hopes that at a convenient and an early period, my services might be dispensed with; and that I might be permitted once more to retire—to pass an unclouded evening after the stormy day of life, in the bosom of domestic tranquillity."

This correspondence was thus closed by Colonel Hamilton. "I feel a conviction that you will finally see your acceptance to be indispensable. It is no compliment to say that no other man can sufficiently unite the public opinion, or can give the requisite weight to the office, in the commencement of the government. These considerations appear to me of themselves decisive. I am not sure that your refusal would not throw every thing into confusion. I am sure that it would have the worst effect imaginable.

"Indeed, as I hinted in a former letter, I think circumstances leave no option."

Although this correspondence does not appear to have absolutely decided General Washington on the part he should embrace, it could not have been without its influence on his judgment, nor have failed to dispose him to yield to the wish of his country. "I would willingly," said he to his estimable friend, General Lincoln, who had also pressed the subject on him, "pass over in silence that part of your letter, in which you mention the persons who are candidates for the two first offices in the executive, if I did not fear the omission might seem to betray a want of confidence. Motives of delicacy have prevented me hitherto from conversing or writing on this subject, whenever I could avoid it with decency. I may, however, with great sincerity, and I believe without offending against modesty or propriety, *say* to *you,* that I most heartily wish the choice to which you allude might not fall upon me: and that if it should, I must reserve to myself the right of making up my final decision, at the last moment, when it can be brought into one view, and when the expediency or inexpediency of a refusal can be more judiciously determined than at present. But be assured, my dear sir, if from any inducement I shall be persuaded ultimately to accept, it will not be (so far as I know my own heart) from any of a private or personal nature. Every personal consideration conspires, to rivet me (if I may use the expression) to retirement. At my time of life, and under my circumstances, nothing in this world can ever draw me from it, unless it be a *conviction* that the partiality of my countrymen had made my services absolutely necessary, joined to a *fear* that my refusal might induce a belief that I preferred the conservation of my own reputation and private ease, to the good of my country. After all, if I should conceive myself in a manner constrained to accept, I call heaven to witness, that this very act would be the greatest sacrifice of my personal feelings and wishes, that ever I have been called upon to make. It would be to forego repose and domestic enjoyment for trouble, perhaps for public obloquy: for I should consider myself as entering upon an unexplored field enveloped on every side with clouds and darkness.

"From this embarrassing situation I had naturally supposed that my declarations at the close of the war would have saved me; and that my sincere intentions, then publicly made known, would have effectually precluded me forever afterwards from being looked upon as a candidate for any office. This hope, as a last anchor of worldly happiness in old age, I had still carefully preserved; until the public papers and private letters from my correspondents in almost every quarter, taught me to apprehend that I might soon be obliged to answer the question, whether I would go again into public life or not?"

"I can say little or nothing new," said he in a letter to the Marquis de Lafayette, "in consequence of the repetition of your opinion on the expediency there will be, for my accepting the office to which you refer. Your sentiments indeed coincide much more nearly with those of my other friends, than with my own feelings. In truth, my difficulties increase and magnify as I draw towards the period, when, according to the common belief, it will be necessary for me to give a definitive answer in one way or other. Should circumstances render it, in a manner, inevitably necessary to be in the affirmative, be assured, my dear sir, I shall assume the task with the most unfeigned reluctance, and with a real diffidence, for which I shall probably receive no credit from the world. If I know my own heart, nothing short of a conviction of duty will induce me again to take an active part in public Affairs. And in that case, if I can form a plan for my own conduct, my endeavours shall be unremittingly exerted (even at the hazard of former fame or present popularity) to extricate my country from the embarrassments in which it is entangled through want of credit; and to establish a general system of policy, which, if pursued, will ensure permanent felicity to the commonwealth. I think I see a path, as clear and as direct as a ray of light, which leads to the attainment of that object. Nothing but harmony, honesty, industry, and frugality, are necessary to make us a great and happy people. Happily, the present posture of affairs, and the prevailing disposition of my countrymen, promise to co-operate in establishing those four great and essential pillars of public felicity.

After the elections had taken place, a general persuasion prevailed that the public will, respecting the chief magistrate of the union, had been too unequivocally manifested not to be certainly obeyed; and several applications were made to General Washington for those offices in the respective states, which would be in the gift of the president of the United States.

As marking the frame of mind with which he came into the government, the following extract is given from one of the many letters written to persons whose pretensions he was disposed to favour. "Should it become absolutely necessary for me to occupy the station in which your letter presupposes me, I have determined to go into it, perfectly free from all engagements of every nature whatsoever.—A conduct in conformity to this resolution, would enable me, in balancing the various pretensions of different candidates for appointments, to act with a sole reference to justice and the public good. This is, in substance, the answer that I have given to all applications (and they are not few) which have already been made. Among the places sought after in these applications, I must not conceal that the office to which you particularly allude is comprehended. This fact I tell you merely as matter of information. My general manner of thinking, as to the propriety of holding myself totally disengaged, will apologize for my not enlarging farther on the subject.

"Though I am sensible that the public suffrage which places a man in office, should prevent him from being swayed, in the execution of it, by his private inclinations, yet he may assuredly, without violating his duty, be indulged in the continuance of his former attachments."

The impotence of the late government, added to the dilatoriness inseparable from its perplexed mode of proceeding on the public business, and to its continued session, had produced among the members of congress such an habitual disregard of punctuality in their attendance on that body, that, although the new government was to commence its operations on the 4th of March, 1789, a house of representatives was not formed until the first, nor a senate until the 6th day of April.

At length, the votes for the president and vice president of the United States were opened and counted in the senate. Neither the animosity of parties, nor the preponderance of the enemies of the new government in some of the states, could deprive General Washington of a single vote. By the unanimous voice of an immense continent, he was called to the chief magistracy of the nation. The second number of votes was given to Mr. John Adams. George Washington and John Adams were therefore declared to be duly elected president and vice president of the United States, to serve for four years from the 4th of March, 1789.[1]

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[1] The reluctance with which General Washington assumed his new dignity, and that genuine modesty which was a distinguished feature of his character, are further illustrated by the following extract from a letter to General Knox. "I feel for those members of the new congress, who, hitherto, have given an unavailing attendance at the theatre of action. For myself, the delay may be compared to a reprieve; for in confidence, I tell *you,* (with the *world* it would obtain *little credit,*) that my movements to the chair of government will be accompanied by feelings not unlike those of a culprit who is going to the place of his execution; so unwilling am I in the evening of life, nearly consumed in public cares, to quit a peaceful abode for an ocean of difficulties, without that competency of political skill, abilities, and inclination, which are necessary to manage the helm. I am sensible that I am embarking the voice of the people, and a good name of my own on this voyage; but what returns will be made for them heaven alone can foretell.—Integrity and firmness are all I can promise; these, be the voyage long or short, shall never foresake me, although I may be deserted by all men; for of the consolations which are to be derived from these, under any circumstances, the world can not deprive me."

CHAPTER V

1789. THE election of General Washington to the office of chief magistrate of the United States, was announced to him at Mount Vernon on the 14th of April, 1789. Accustomed to respect the wishes of his fellow citizens, he did not think himself at liberty to decline an appointment conferred upon him by the suffrage of an entire people. His acceptance of it, and his expressions of gratitude for this fresh proof of the esteem and confidence of his country, were connected with declarations of diffidence in himself. "I wish," he said, "that there may not be reason for regretting the choice,—for indeed, all I can promise, is to accomplish that which can be done by an honest zeal."

As the public business required the immediate attendance of the president at the seat of government, he hastened his departure; and, on the second day after receiving notice of his appointment, took leave of Mount Vernon.

In an entry made by himself in his diary, the feelings inspired by an occasion so affecting to his mind are thus described, "about ten o'clock I bade adieu to Mount Vernon, to private life, and to domestic felicity; and with a mind oppressed with more anxious and painful sensations than I have words to express, set out for New York in company with Mr. Thompson, and Colonel Humphries, with the best dispositions to render service to my country in obedience to its call, but with less hope of answering its expectations."

He was met by a number of gentlemen residing in Alexandria, and escorted to their city, where a public dinner had been prepared to which he was invited. The sentiments of veneration and affection which were felt by all classes of his fellow citizens for their patriot chief, were manifested by the most flattering marks of heart-felt respect; and by addresses which evinced the unlimited confidence reposed in his virtues and his talents. A place can not be given to these addresses: but that from the citizens of Alexandria derives such pretensions to particular notice from the recollection that it is to be considered as an effusion from the hearts of his neighbours and private friends, that its insertion may be pardoned. It is in the following words:

"Again your country commands your care. Obedient to its wishes, unmindful of your ease, we see you again relinquishing the bliss of retirement; and this too at a period of life, when nature itself seems to authorize a preference of repose!

"Not to extol your glory as a soldier; not to pour forth our gratitude for past services; not to acknowledge the justice of the unexampled honour which has been conferred upon you by the spontaneous and unanimous suffrages of three millions of freemen, in your election to the supreme magistracy; nor to admire the patriotism which directs your conduct, do your neighbours and friends now address you. Themes less splendid but more endearing, impress our minds. The first and best of citizens must leave us: our aged must lose their ornament; our youth their model; our agriculture its improver; our commerce its friend; our infant academy its protector; our poor their benefactor; and the interior navigation of the Potomac (an event replete with the most extensive utility, already, by your unremitted exertions, brought into partial use) its institutor and promoter.

"Farewell!—go! and make a grateful people happy, a people, who will be doubly grateful when they contemplate this recent sacrifice for their interest.

"To that Being who maketh and unmaketh at His will, we commend you; and after the accomplishment of the arduous business to which you are called, may He restore to us again, the best of men, and the most beloved fellow citizen!"

To this affectionate address General Washington returned the following answer:

"Gentlemen,

"Although I ought not to conceal, yet I can not describe the painful emotions which I felt in being called upon to determine whether I would accept or refuse the presidency of the United States. The unanimity in the choice, the opinion of my friends communicated from different parts of Europe, as well as from America, the apparent wish of those who were not entirely satisfied with the constitution in its present form; and an ardent desire on my own part to be instrumental in connecting the good will of my countrymen towards each other, have induced an acceptance. Those who know me best (and you my fellow citizens are, from your situation, in that number) know better than any others, my love of retirement is so great, that no earthly consideration, short of a conviction of duty, could have prevailed upon me to depart from my resolution 'never more to take any share in transactions of a public nature.' For at my age, and in my circumstances, what prospects or advantages could I propose to myself, from embarking again on the tempestuous and uncertain ocean of public life?

"I do not feel myself under the necessity of making public declarations, in order to convince you, gentlemen, of my attachment to yourselves, and regard for your interests. The whole tenor of my life has been open to your inspection; and my past actions, rather than my present declarations, must be the pledge of my future conduct.

"In the mean time, I thank you most sincerely for the expressions of kindness contained in your valedictory address. It is true, just after having bade adieu to my domestic connexions, this tender proof of your friendships is but too well calculated still further to awaken my sensibility, and increase my regret at parting from the enjoyments of private life.

"All that now remains for me is to commit myself and you to the protection of that beneficent Being who, on a former occasion, hath happily brought us together, after a long and distressing separation. Perhaps, the same gracious Providence will again indulge me. Unutterable sensations must then be left to more expressive silence; while from an aching heart, I bid you all, my affectionate friends, and kind neighbours, farewell!"

In the afternoon of the same day, he left Alexandria, and was attended by his neighbours to Georgetown, where a number of citizens from the state of Maryland had assembled to receive him.

Throughout his journey the people continued to manifest the same feeling. Crowds flocked around him wherever he stopped; and corps of militia, and companies of the most respectable citizens, escorted him through their respective states. At Philadelphia, he was received with peculiar splendour. Gray's bridge, over the Schuylkill, was highly decorated. In imitation of the triumphal exhibitions of ancient Rome, an arch, composed of laurel, in which was displayed the simple elegance of true taste, was erected at each end of it, and on each side was a laurel shrubbery. As the object of universal admiration passed under the arch, a civic crown was, unperceived by him, let down upon his head by a youth ornamented with sprigs of laurel, who was assisted by machinery. The fields and avenues leading from the Schuylkill to Philadelphia, were crowded with people, through whom General Washington was conducted into the city by a numerous and respectable body of citizens; and at night the town was illuminated. The next day, at Trenton, he was welcomed in a manner as new as it was pleasing. In addition to the usual demonstrations of respect and attachment which were given by the discharge of cannon, by military corps, and by private persons of distinction, the gentler sex prepared in their own taste, a tribute of applause indicative of the grateful recollection in which they held their deliverance twelve years before from a formidable enemy. On the bridge over the creek which passes through the town, was erected a triumphal arch highly ornamented with laurels and flowers: and supported by thirteen pillars, each entwined with wreaths of evergreen. On the front arch was inscribed in large gilt letters,

THE DEFENDER OF THE MOTHERS
WILL BE THE
PROTECTOR OF THE DAUGHTERS.

On the centre of the arch above the inscription, was a dome or cupola of flowers and evergreens, encircling the dates of two memorable events which were peculiarly interesting to New Jersey. The first was the battle of Trenton, and the second the bold and judicious stand made by the American troops at the same creek, by which the progress of the British army was arrested on the evening preceding the battle of Princeton.

At this place, he was met by a party of matrons leading their daughters dressed in white, who carried baskets of flowers in their hands, and sang, with exquisite sweetness, an ode of two stanzas, composed for the occasion.

At Brunswick, he was joined by the governor of New Jersey, who accompanied him to Elizabethtown Point. A committee of congress received him on the road, and conducted him with military parade to the Point, where he took leave of the governor and other gentlemen of Jersey, and embarked for New York in an elegant barge of thirteen oars, manned by thirteen branch pilots prepared for the purpose by the citizens of New York.

"The display of boats," says the general, in his private journal, "which attended and joined on this occasion, some with vocal and others with instrumental music on board, the decorations of the ships, the roar of cannon, and the loud acclamations of the people, which rent the sky as I passed along the wharves, filled my mind with sensations as painful (contemplating the reverse of this scene, which may be the case after all my labours to do good) as they were pleasing."

At the stairs on Murray's wharf, which had been prepared and ornamented for the purpose, he was received by the governor of New York, and conducted with military honours, through an immense concourse of people, to the apartments provided for him. These were attended by all who were in office, and by many private citizens of distinction, who pressed around him to offer their congratulations, and to express the joy which glowed in their bosoms at seeing the man in whom all confided, at the head of the American empire. This day of extravagant joy was succeeded by a splendid illumination.

It is no equivocal mark of the worth of Washington, and of the soundness of his judgment, that it could neither be corrupted nor misguided by these flattering testimonials of attachment.

Two days before the arrival of the President, the Vice President took his seat in the senate, and addressed that body in a dignified speech adapted to the occasion, in which, after manifesting the high opinion that statesman always entertained of his countrymen, he thus expressed his sentiments of the executive magistrate.

"It is with satisfaction that I congratulate the people of America on the formation of a national constitution, and the fair prospect of a consistent administration of a government of laws: on the acquisition of a house of representatives, chosen by themselves; of a senate thus composed by their own state legislatures; and on the prospect of an executive authority in the hands of one whose portrait I shall not presume to draw.—Were I blessed with powers to do justice to his character, it would be impossible to increase the confidence or affection of his country, or make the smallest addition to his glory. This can only be effected by a discharge of the present exalted trust on the same principles, with the same abilities and virtues which have uniformly appeared in all his former conduct, public or private. May I nevertheless be indulged to inquire, if we look over the catalogue of the first magistrates of nations, whether they have been denominated presidents or consuls, kings or princes, where shall we find one, whose commanding talents and virtues, whose over-ruling good fortune, have so completely united all hearts and voices in his favour? who enjoyed the esteem and admiration of foreign nations, and fellow citizens, with equal unanimity? qualities so uncommon, are no common blessings to the country that possesses them. By these great qualities, and their benign effects, has Providence marked out the head of this nation, with a hand so distinctly visible, as to have been seen by all men, and mistaken by none."

A President of the United States being a new political personage, to a great portion of whose time the public was entitled, it became proper to digest a system of conduct to be observed in his intercourse with the world, which would keep in view the duties of his station, without entirely disregarding his personal accommodation, or the course of public opinion. In the interval between his arrival in New York, and entering on the duties of his office, those most capable of advising on the subject were consulted; and some rules were framed by General Washington for his government in these respects. As one of them, the allotment of a particular hour for receiving visits not on business, became the subject of much animadversion; and, being considered merely as an imitation of the levee days established by crowned heads, has constituted not the least important of the charges which have been made against this gentleman. The motives assigned by himself for the rule may not be unworthy of attention.

Not long after the government came into operation, Doctor Stuart, a gentleman nearly connected with the President in friendship and by marriage, addressed to him a letter stating the accusations which were commonly circulating in Virginia on various subjects, and especially against the regal manners of those who administered the affairs of the nation. In answer to this letter the President observed, "while the eyes of America, perhaps of the world, are turned to this government, and many are watching the movements of all those who are concerned in its administration, I should like to be informed, through so good a medium, of the public opinion of both men and measures, and of none more than myself;—not so much of what may be thought commendable parts, if any, of my conduct, as of those which are conceived to be of a different complexion. The man who means to commit no wrong will never be guilty of enormities, consequently can never be unwilling to learn what are ascribed to him as foibles.—If they are really such, the knowledge of them in a well disposed mind will go half way towards a reform.—If they are not errors, he can explain and justify the motives of his actions.

"At a distance from the theatre of action, truth is not always related without embellishment, and sometimes is entirely perverted from a misconception of the causes which produced the effects that are the subject of censure.

"This leads me to think that a system which I found it indispensably necessary to adopt upon my first coming to this city, might have undergone severe strictures, and have had motives very foreign from those that governed me, assigned as causes thereof.—I mean first, returning *no* visits: second, appointing certain days to receive them generally (not to the exclusion however of visits on any other days under particular circumstances;) and third, at first entertaining no company, and afterwards (until I was unable to entertain any at all) confining it to official characters. A few days evinced the necessity of the two first in so clear a point of view, that had I not adopted it, I should have been unable to have attended to any sort of business, unless I had applied the hours allotted to rest and refreshment to this purpose; for by the time I had done breakfast, and thence until dinner—and afterwards until bed-time, I could not get relieved from the ceremony of one visit before I had to attend to another. In a word, I had no leisure to read or to answer the despatches that were pouring in upon me from all quarters."

In a subsequent letter written to the same gentleman, after his levees had been openly censured by the enemies of his administration, he thus expressed himself.

"Before the custom was established, which now accommodates foreign characters, strangers and others who from motives of curiosity, respect to the chief magistrate, or any other cause, are induced to call upon me, I was unable to attend to any business whatsoever. For gentlemen, consulting their own convenience rather than mine, were calling from the time I rose from breakfast—often before—until I sat down to dinner. This, as I resolved not to neglect my public duties, reduced me to the choice of one of these alternatives; either to refuse them *altogether,* or to appropriate a time for the reception of them. The first would, I well knew, be disgusting to many;—the latter I expected, would undergo animadversion from those who would find fault with or without cause. To please every body was impossible. I therefore adopted that line of conduct which combined public advantage with private convenience, and which, in my judgment, was unexceptionable in itself.

"These visits are optional. They are made without invitation. Between the hours of three and four every Tuesday, I am prepared to receive them. Gentlemen, often in great numbers, come and go;—chat with each other;—and act as they please. A porter shows them into the room; and they retire from it when they choose, and without ceremony. At their first entrance, they salute me, and I them, and as many as I can talk to, I do. What pomp there is in all this I am unable to discover. Perhaps it consists in not sitting. To this two reasons are opposed: first, it is unusual; secondly, (which is a more substantial one) because I have no room large enough to contain a third of the chairs which would be sufficient to admit it. If it is supposed that ostentation, or the fashions of courts (which by the bye I believe originate oftener in convenience not to say necessity, than is generally imagined) gave rise to this custom, I will boldly affirm that *no* supposition was ever more erroneous; for were I to indulge my inclinations, every moment that I could withdraw from the fatigues of my station should be spent in retirement. That they are not, proceeds from the sense I entertain of the propriety of giving to every one as free access as consists with that respect which is due to the chair of government;—and that respect, I conceive, is neither to be acquired or preserved, but by maintaining a just medium between too much state, and too great familiarity.

"Similar to the above, but of a more familiar and sociable kind, are the visits every Friday afternoon to Mrs. Washington, where I always am. These public meetings, and a dinner once a week to as many as my table will hold, with the references to and from the different departments of state, and other communications with all parts of the union, is as much if not more than I am able to undergo; for I have already had within less than a year, two severe attacks;—the last worse than the first, —a third, it is more than probable will put me to sleep with my fathers—at what distance this may be, I know not."

The ceremonies of the inauguration having been adjusted by congress, the President attended in the senate chamber, on the 30th of April, in order to take, in the presence of both houses, the oath prescribed by the constitution.

To gratify the public curiosity, an open gallery adjoining the senate chamber had been selected by congress, as the place in which the oath should be administered. Having taken it in the view of an immense concourse of people, whose loud and repeated acclamations attested the joy with which his being proclaimed President of the United States inspired them, he returned to the senate chamber, where he delivered the following address.

"*Fellow citizens of the Senate and of the House of Representatives:*

"Among the vicissitudes incident to life, no event could have filled me with greater anxieties than that of which the notification was transmitted by your order, and received on the 14th day of the present month. On the one hand, I was summoned by my country, whose voice I can never hear but with veneration and love, from a retreat which I had chosen with the fondest predilection, and, in my flattering hopes, with an immutable decision, as the asylum of my declining years: a retreat which was rendered every day more necessary as well as more dear to me, by the addition of habit to inclination, and of frequent interruptions in my health to the gradual waste committed on it by time. On the other hand, the magnitude and difficulty of the trust to which the voice of my country called me, being sufficient to awaken in the wisest and most experienced of her citizens a distrustful scrutiny into his qualifications, could not but overwhelm with despondence, one, who, inheriting inferior endowments from nature, and unpractised in the duties of civil administration, ought to be peculiarly conscious of his own deficiencies. In this conflict of emotions, all I dare aver is, that it has been my faithful study to collect my duty from a just appreciation of every circumstance by which it might be effected. All I dare hope is, that, if in accepting this task, I have been too much swayed by a grateful remembrance of former instances, or by an affectionate sensibility to this transcendent proof of the confidence of my fellow citizens: and have thence too little consulted my incapacity, as well as disinclination for the weighty and untried cares before me; my ERROR will be palliated by the motives which misled me, and its consequences be judged by my country, with some share of the partiality in which they originated.

"Such being the impressions under which I have, in obedience to the public summons, repaired to the present station, it will be peculiarly improper to omit in this first official act, my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe—who presides in the councils of nations—and whose providential aids can supply every human defect, that his benediction may consecrate to the liberties and happiness of the people of the United States, a government instituted by themselves for these essential purposes: and may enable every instrument employed in its administration, to execute with success, the functions allotted to his charge. In tendering this homage to the great Author of every public and private good, I assure myself that it expresses your sentiments not less than my own; nor those of my fellow citizens at large, less than either. No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand which conducts the affairs of men, more than the people of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency; and in the important revolution just accomplished in the system of their united government, the tranquil deliberations and voluntary consent of so many distinct communities, from which the event has resulted, can not be compared with the means by which most governments have been established, without some return of pious gratitude along with an humble anticipation of the future blessings which the past seem to presage. These reflections, arising out of the present crisis, have forced themselves too strongly on my mind to be suppressed. You will join with me, I trust, in thinking that there are none, under the influence of which the proceedings of a new and free government can more auspiciously commence.

"By the article establishing the executive department, it is made the duty of the President 'to recommend to your consideration, such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient.' The circumstances under which I now meet you will acquit me from entering into that subject, farther than to refer to the great constitutional charter under which you are assembled, and which in defining your powers, designates the objects to which your attention is to be given. It will be more consistent with those circumstances, and far more congenial with the feelings which actuate me, to substitute in place of a recommendation of particular measures, the tribute that is due to the talents, the rectitude, and the patriotism, which adorn the characters selected to devise and adopt them. In these honourable qualifications, I behold the surest pledges that, as on one side, no local prejudices or attachments, no separate views nor party animosities, will misdirect the comprehensive and equal eye which ought to watch over this great assemblage of communities and interests: so, on another, that the foundations of our national policy will be laid in the pure and immutable principles of private morality; and the pre-eminence of free government be exemplified by all the attributes which can win the affections of its citizens, and command the respect of the world. I dwell on this prospect with every satisfaction which an ardent love for my country can inspire, since there is no truth more thoroughly established than that there exists, in the economy and course of nature, an indissoluble union between virtue and happiness—between duty and advantage—between the genuine maxims of an honest and magnanimous policy, and the solid rewards of public prosperity and felicity; since we ought to be no less persuaded that the propitious smiles of heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which heaven itself has ordained: and since the preservation of the sacred fire of liberty, and the destiny of the republican model of government, are justly considered as DEEPLY, perhaps as FINALLY staked, on the experiment entrusted to the hands of the American people.

"Besides the ordinary objects submitted to your care, it will remain with your judgment to decide, how far an exercise of the occasional power delegated by the fifth article of the constitution is rendered expedient, at the present juncture, by the nature of objections which have been urged against the system, or by the degree of inquietude which has given birth to them. Instead of undertaking particular recommendations on this subject, in which I could be guided by no lights derived from official opportunities, I shall again give way to my entire confidence in your discernment and pursuit of the public good: for I assure myself that whilst you carefully avoid every alteration which might endanger the benefits of a united and effective government, or which ought to await the future lessons of experience, a reverence for the characteristic rights of freemen, and a regard for the public harmony, will sufficiently influence your deliberations on the question how far the former can be more impregnably fortified, or the latter be safely and advantageously promoted.

"To the preceding observations I have one to add, which will be most properly addressed to the house of representatives. It concerns myself, and will therefore be as brief as possible. When I was first honoured with a call into the service of my country, then on the eve of an arduous struggle for its liberties, the light in which I contemplated my duty required that I should renounce every pecuniary compensation. From this resolution I have in no instance departed. And being still under the impressions which produced it, I must decline, as inapplicable to myself, any share in the personal emoluments which may be indispensably included in a permanent provision for the executive department; and must accordingly pray that the pecuniary estimates for the station in which I am placed, may, during my continuance in it, be limited to such actual expenditures as the public good may be thought to require.

"Having thus imparted to you my sentiments, as they have been awakened by the occasion which brings us together, I shall take my present leave; but not without resorting once more to the benign Parent of the human race, in humble supplication, that since He has been pleased to favour the American people with opportunities for deliberating in perfect tranquillity, and dispositions for deciding with unparalleled unanimity on a form of government, for the security of their union, and the advancement of their happiness, so His divine blessing may be equally *conspicuous* in the enlarged views, the temperate consultations, and the wise measures on which the success of this government must depend."

In their answer to this speech, the senate say, "The unanimous suffrage of the elective body in your favour, is peculiarly expressive of the gratitude, confidence, and affection of the citizens of America, and is the highest testimonial at once of your merit, and their esteem. We are sensible, sir, that nothing but the voice of your fellow citizens could have called you from a retreat, chosen with the fondest predilection, endeared by habit, and consecrated to the repose of declining years. We rejoice, and with us all America, that, in obedience to the call of our common country, you have returned once more to public life. In you all parties confide; in you all interests unite; and we have no doubt that your past services, great as they have been, will be equalled by your future exertions; and that your prudence and sagacity, as a statesman, will tend to avert the dangers to which we were exposed, to give stability to the present government, and dignity and splendour to that country, which your skill and valour as a soldier, so eminently contributed to raise to independence and to empire."

The affection for the person and character of the President with which the answer of the house of representatives glowed, promised that between this branch of the legislature also and the executive, the most harmonious co-operation in the public service might be expected.

"The representatives of the people of the United States," says this address, "present their congratulations on the event by which your fellow citizens have attested the pre-eminence of your merit. You have long held the first place in their esteem. You have often received tokens of their affection. You now possess the only proof that remained of their gratitude for your services, of their reverence for your wisdom, and of their confidence in your virtues. You enjoy the highest, because the truest honour, of being the first magistrate, by the unanimous choice of the freest people on the face of the earth.

After noticing the several communications made in the speech, intense of deep felt respect and affection, the answer concludes thus:

"Such are the sentiments with which we have thought fit to address you. They flow from our own hearts, and we verily believe that among the millions we represent, there is not a virtuous citizen whose heart will disown them.

"All that remains is, that we join in your fervent supplications for the blessing of heaven on our country; and that we add our own for the choicest of these blessings on the most beloved of her citizens."

A perfect knowledge of the antecedent state of things being essential to a due administration of the executive department, its attainment engaged the immediate attention of the President; and he required the temporary heads of departments to prepare and lay before him such statements and documents as would give this information.

But in the full view which it was useful to take of the interior, many objects were to be contemplated, the documents respecting which were not to be found in official records. The progress which had been made in assuaging the bitter animosities engendered in the sharp contest respecting the adoption of the constitution, and the means which might be used for conciliating the affections of all good men to the new government, without enfeebling its essential principles, were subjects of the most interesting inquiry.

The agitation had been too great to be suddenly calmed; and for the active opponents of the system to become suddenly its friends, or even indifferent to its fate, would have been a victory of reason over passion, or a surrender of individual judgment to the decision of a majority, examples of which are rarely given in the progress of human affairs.

In some of the states, a disposition to acquiesce in the decision which had been made, and to await the issue of a fair experiment of the constitution, was avowed by the minority. In others, the chagrin of defeat seemed to increase the original hostility to the instrument; and serious fears were entertained by its friends, that a second general convention might pluck from it the most essential of its powers, before their value, and the safety with which they might be confided where they were placed, could be ascertained by experience.

From the same cause, exerting itself in a different direction, the friends of the new system had been still more alarmed. In all those states where the opposition was sufficiently formidable to inspire a hope of success, the effort was made to fill the legislature with the declared enemies of the government, and thus to commit it, in its infancy, to the custody of its foes. Their fears were quieted for the present. In both branches of the legislature, the federalists, an appellation at that time disinguishing those who had supported the constitution, formed the majority; and it soon appeared that a new convention was too bold an experiment to be applied for by the requisite number of states. The condition of individuals too, was visibly becoming more generally eligible. Industry, notwithstanding the causes which had diminished its profits, was gradually improving their affairs; and the new course of thinking, inspired by the adoption of a constitution prohibiting all laws impairing the obligation of contracts, had, in a great measure, restored that confidence which is essential to the internal prosperity of nations. From these, or from other causes, the crisis of the pressure on individuals seemed to be passing away, and brighter prospects to be opening on them.

But, two states still remained out of the pale of the union; and a mass of ill humour existed among those who were included within it, which increased the necessity of circumspection in those who administered the government.

To the western parts of the continent, the attention of the executive was attracted by discontents which were displayed with some violence, and which originated in circumstances, and in interests, peculiar to that country.

Spain, in possession of the mouth of the Mississippi, had refused to permit the citizens of the United States to follow its waters into the ocean, and had occasionally tolerated or interdicted their commerce to New Orleans, as had been suggested by the supposed interest or caprice of the Spanish government, or of its representatives in America. The eyes of the inhabitants adjacent to the waters which emptied into that river, were turned down it, as the only channel through which the surplus produce of their luxuriant soil could be conveyed to the markets of the world. Believing that the future wealth and prosperity of their country depended on the use of that river, they gave some evidence of a disposition to drop from the confederacy, if this valuable acquisition could not otherwise be made. This temper could not fail to be viewed with interest by the neighbouring powers, who had been encouraged by it, and by the imbecility of the government, to enter into intrigues of an alarming nature.

Previous to his departure from Mount Vernon, the President had received intelligence, too authentic to be disregarded, of private machinations by real or pretended agents both of Spain and Great Britain, which were extremely hostile to the peace, and to the integrity of the union.

Spain had intimated that the navigation of the Mississippi could never be conceded, while the inhabitants of the western country remained connected with the Atlantic states, but might be freely granted to them, if they should form an independent empire.

On the other hand, a gentleman from Canada, whose ostensible business was to repossess himself of some lands on the Ohio which had been formerly granted to him, frequently discussed the vital importance of the navigation of the Mississippi, and privately assured several individuals of great influence, that if they were disposed to assert their rights, he was authorized by

Lord Dorchester, the governor of Canada, to say, that they might rely confidently on his assistance. With the aid it was in his power to give, they might seize New Orleans, fortify the Balise at the mouth of the Mississippi, and maintain themselves in that place against the utmost efforts of Spain.

The probability of failing in any attempt to hold the mouth of the Mississippi by force, and the resentment against Great Britain which prevailed generally throughout the western country, diminished the danger to be apprehended from any machinations of that power; but against those of Spain, the same security did not exist.

In contemplating the situation of the United States in their relations not purely domestic, the object demanding most immediate consideration was the hostility of several tribes of Indians. The military strength of the nations who inhabited the country between the lakes, the Mississippi, and the Ohio, was computed at five thousand men, of whom about fifteen hundred were at open war with the United States. Treaties had been concluded with the residue; but the attachment of young savages to war and the provocation given by the undistinguishing vengeance which had been taken by the whites in their expedition into the Indian country, furnished reasons for apprehending that these treaties would soon be broken.

In the south, the Creeks, who could bring into the field six thousand fighting men, were at war with Georgia. In the mind of their leader, the son of a white man, some irritation had been produced by the confiscation of the lands of his father, who had resided in that state; and several other refugees whose property had also been confiscated, contributed still further to exasperate the nation. But the immediate point in contest between them was a tract of land on the Oconee, which the state of Georgia claimed under a purchase, the validity of which was denied by the Indians.

The regular force of the United States was less than six hundred men.

Not only the policy of accommodating differences by negotiation which the government was in no condition to terminate by the sword; but a real respect for the rights of the natives, and a regard for the claims of justice and humanity, disposed the President to endeavour, in the first instance, to remove every cause of quarrel by a treaty; and his message to congress on this subject evidenced his preference of pacific measures.

Possessing many valuable articles of commerce for which the best market was often found on the coast of the Mediterranean, struggling to export them in their own bottoms, and unable to afford a single gun for their protection, the Americans could not view with unconcern the dispositions which were manifested towards them by the Barbary powers. A treaty had been formed with the emperor of Morocco; but from Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli, peace had not been purchased; and those regencies consider all as enemies to whom they have not sold their friendship. The unprotected vessels of America presented a tempting object to their rapacity; and their hostility was the more terrible, because by their public law, prisoners became slaves.

The United States were at peace with all the powers of Europe; but controversies of a delicate nature existed with some of them, the adjustment of which required a degree of moderation and firmness, which there was reason to fear, might not, in every instance, be exhibited.

The early apprehensions with which Spain had contemplated the future strength of the United States, and the consequent disposition of the house of Bourbon to restrict them to narrow limits, have been already noticed. After the conclusion of the war, the attempt to form a treaty with that power had been repeated; but no advance towards an agreement on the points of difference between the two governments had been made. A long and intricate negotiation between the secretary of foreign affairs, and Don Guardoqui, the minister of his Catholic majesty, had terminated with the old government; and the result was an inflexible adherence on the part of Mr. Guardoqui to the exclusion of the citizens of the United States from navigating the Mississippi below their southern boundary. On this point there was much reason to fear that the cabinet of Madrid would remain immoveable. The violence with which the discontents of the western people were expressed, furnished Spain with additional motives for perpetuating the evil of which they complained. Aware of the embarrassments which this display of restlessness must occasion, and sensible of the increased difficulty and delay with which a removal of its primary cause must be attended, the executive perceived in this critical state of things, abundant cause for the exercise of its watchfulness, and of its prudence. With Spain, there was also a contest respecting boundaries. The treaty of peace had extended the limits of the United States to the thirty-first degree of north latitude, but the pretensions of the Catholic King were carried north of that line, to an undefined extent. He claimed as far as he had conquered from Britain, but the precise limits of his conquest were not ascertained.

The circumstances attending the points of difference with Great Britain, were still more serious; because, in their progress, a temper unfavourable to accommodation had been uniformly displayed.

The resentments produced by the various calamities war had occasioned, were not terminated with their cause. The idea that Great Britain was the natural enemy of America had become habitual. Believing it impossible for that nation to have relinquished its views of conquest, many found it difficult to bury their animosities, and to act upon the sentiment contained in the declaration of independence, "to hold them as the rest of mankind, enemies in war, in peace friends." In addition to the complaints respecting the violation of the treaty of peace, events were continually supplying this temper with fresh aliment. The disinclination which the cabinet of London had discovered to a commercial treaty with the United States was not attributed exclusively to the cause which had been assigned for it. It was in part ascribed to that jealousy with which Britain was supposed to view the growing trade of America.

The general restrictions on commerce by which every maritime power sought to promote its own navigation, and that part of the European system in particular, by which each aimed at a monopoly of the trade of its colonies, were felt with peculiar keenness when enforced by England. The people of America were perhaps the more sensible to the British regulations on this subject, because, having composed a part of that empire, they had grown up in the habit of a free intercourse with all its ports; and, without accurately appreciating the cause to which a change of this usage was to be ascribed, they attributed it to a jealousy of their prosperity, and to an inclination to diminish the value of their independence. In this suspicious temper, almost every unfavourable event which occurred was traced up to British hostility.

That an attempt to form a commercial treaty with Portugal had failed, was attributed to the influence of the cabinet of London; and to the machinations of the same power were also ascribed the danger from the corsairs of Barbary, and the bloody incursions of the Indians. The resentment excited by these causes was felt by a large proportion of the American people; and the expression of it was common and public. That correspondent dispositions existed in England is by no means improbable, and the necessary effect of this temper was to increase the difficulty of adjusting the differences between the two nations.

With France, the most perfect harmony subsisted. Those attachments which originated in the signal services received from his most Christian Majesty during the war of the revolution, had sustained no diminution. Yet, from causes which it was found difficult to counteract, the commercial intercourse between the two nations was not so extensive as had been expected. It was the interest, and of consequence the policy of France, to avail herself of the misunderstandings between the United States and Great Britain, in order to obtain such regulations as might gradually divert the increasing trade of the American continent from those channels in which it had been accustomed to flow; and a disposition was felt throughout the United States to co-operate with her, in enabling her merchants, by legislative encouragements, to rival those of Britain in the American market.

A great revolution had commenced in that country, the first stage of which was completed by limiting the powers of the monarch, and by the establishment of a popular assembly. In no part of the globe was this revolution hailed with more joy than in America. The influence it would have on the affairs of the world was not then distinctly foreseen: and the philanthropist, without becoming a political partisan, rejoiced in the event. On this subject, therefore, but one sentiment existed.

The relations of the United States with the other powers of Europe, did not require particular attention. Their dispositions were rather friendly than otherwise; and an inclination was generally manifested to participate in the advantages, which the erection of an independent empire on the western shores of the Atlantic, held forth to the commercial world.

By the ministers of foreign powers in America, it would readily be supposed, that the first steps taken by the new government would, not only be indicative of its present system, but would probably affect its foreign relations permanently, and that the influence of the President would be felt in the legislature. Scarcely was the exercise of his executive functions commenced, when the President received an application from the Count de Moustiers, the minister of France, requesting a private conference. On being told that the department of foreign affairs was the channel through which all official business should pass, the Count replied that the interview he requested was, not for the purpose of actual business, but rather as preparatory to its future transaction.

The next day, at one in the afternoon, was named for the interview. The Count commenced the conversation with declarations of his personal regard for America, the manifestations of which, he said, had been early and uniform. His nation too was well disposed to be upon terms of amity with the United States: but at his public reception, there were occurrences which he thought indicative of coolness in the secretary of foreign affairs, who had, he feared, while in Europe, imbibed prejudices not only against Spain, but against France also. If this conjecture should be right, the present head of that department could not be an agreeable organ of intercourse with the President. He then took a view of the modern usages of European courts, which, he said, favoured the practice he recommended of permitting foreign ministers to make their communications directly to the chief of the executive. "He then presented a letter," says the President in his private journal, "which he termed confidential, and to be considered as addressed to me in my private character, which was too strongly marked with an intention, as well as a wish, to have no person between the Minister and President, in the transaction of business between the two nations."

In reply to these observations, the President gave the most explicit assurances that, judging from his own feelings, and from the public sentiment, there existed in America a reciprocal disposition to be on the best terms with France. That whatever former difficulties might have occurred, he was persuaded the secretary of foreign affairs had offered no intentional disrespect, either to the minister, or to his nation. Without undertaking to know the private opinions of Mr. Jay, he would declare that he had never heard that officer express, directly or indirectly, any sentiment unfavourable to either.

Reason and usage, he added, must direct the mode of treating national and official business. If rules had been established, they must be conformed to. If they were yet to be framed, it was hoped that they would be convenient and proper. So far as ease could be made to comport with regularity, and with necessary forms, it ought to be consulted; but custom, and the dignity of office, were not to be disregarded. The conversation continued upwards of an hour, but no change was made in the resolution of the President.

The subjects which pressed for immediate attention on the first legislature assembled under the new government, were numerous and important. Much was to be created, and much to be reformed.

The subject of revenue, as constituting the vital spring without which the action of government could not long be continued, was taken up in the house of representatives, as soon as it could be introduced. The qualification of the members was succeeded by a motion for the house to resolve itself into a committee of the whole on the state of the union; and in that committee, a resolution was moved by Mr. Madison, declaring the opinion that certain duties ought to be levied on goods, wares, and merchandise, imported into the United States; and on the tonnage of vessels.

As it was deemed important to complete a temporary system in time to embrace the spring importations, Mr. Madison presented the scheme of impost which had been recommended by the former congress, and had already received the approbation of a majority of the states; to which he added a general proposition for a duty on tonnage. By this scheme specific duties were imposed on certain enumerated articles; and an ad valorem duty on those not enumerated. Mr. Fitzsimmons, of Pennsylvania, moved an amendment, enlarging the catalogue of enumerated articles.

Mr. Madison having consented to subjoin the amendment proposed by Mr. Fitzsimmons to the original resolution, it was received by the committee; but in proceeding to fill up the blanks with the sum taxable on each article, it was soon perceived that gentlemen had viewed the subject in very different lights. The tax on many articles was believed to press more heavily on some states than on others; and apprehensions were expressed that, in the form of protecting duties, the industry of one part of the union would be encouraged by premiums charged on the labour of another part. On the discrimination between the duty on the tonnage of foreign and American bottoms, a great degree of sensibility was discovered. The citizens of the United States not owning a sufficient number of vessels to export all the produce of the country, it was said that the increased tonnage on foreign bottoms operated as a tax on agriculture, and a premium to navigation. This discrimination, it was therefore contended, ought to be very small.

In answer to these arguments, Mr. Madison said, "if it is expedient for America to have vessels employed in commerce at all, it will be proper that she have enough to answer all the purposes intended; to form a school for seamen; to lay the foundation of a navy; and to be able to support itself against the interference of foreigners. I do not think there is much weight in the observations that the duty we are about to lay in favour of American vessels is a burden on the community, and particularly oppressive to some parts. But if there were, it may be a burden of that kind which will ultimately save us from one that is greater.

"I consider an acquisition of maritime strength essential to this country; should we ever be so unfortunate as to be engaged in war, what but this can defend our towns and cities upon the sea coast? Or what but this can enable us to repel an invading enemy? Those parts which are said to bear an undue proportion of the burden of the additional duty on foreign shipping, are those which will be most exposed to the operations of a predatory war, and will require the greatest exertions of the union in their defence. If therefore some little sacrifice be made by them to obtain this important object, they will be peculiarly rewarded for it in the hour of danger. Granting a preference to our own navigation will insensibly bring it forward to that perfection so essential to American safety; and though it may produce some little inequality at first, it will soon ascertain its level, and become uniform throughout the union."

But no part of the system was discussed with more animation than that which proposed to make discriminations in favour of those nations with whom the United States had formed commercial treaties. In the debate on this subject, opinions and feelings with respect to foreign powers were disclosed, which, strengthening with circumstances, afterwards agitated the whole American continent.

While the resolutions on which the bills were to be framed were under debate, Mr. Benson rose to inquire on what principle the proposed discriminations between foreign nations was founded? "It was certainly proper," he said, "to comply with existing treaties. But those treaties stipulated no such preference. Congress then was at liberty to consult the interests of the United States. If those interests would be promoted by the measure, he should be willing to adopt it, but he wished its policy to be shown."

The resolutions, as reported, were supported by Mr. Madison, Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Fitzsimmons, Mr. Clymer, Mr. Page, and Mr. Jackson.

They relied much upon the public sentiment which had, they said, been unequivocally expressed through the several state legislatures and otherwise, against placing foreign nations generally, on a footing with the allies of the United States. So strong was this sentiment, that to its operation the existing constitution was principally to be ascribed. They thought it important to prove to those nations who had declined forming commercial treaties with them, that the United States possessed and would exercise the power of retaliating any regulations unfavourable to their trade, and they insisted strongly on the advantages of America in a war of commercial regulation, should this measure produce one.

The disposition France had lately shown to relax with regard to the United States, the rigid policy by which her counsels had generally been guided, ought to be cultivated. The evidence of this disposition was an edict by which American built ships purchased by French subjects became naturalized. There was reason to believe that the person charged with the affairs of the United States at that court, had made some favourable impressions, which the conduct of the American government ought not to efface.

With great earnestness it was urged, that from artificial or adventitious causes, the commerce between the United States and Great Britain had exceeded its natural boundary. It was wise to give such political advantages to other nations as would enable them to acquire their due share of the direct trade. It was also wise to impart some benefits to nations that had formed commercial treaties with the United States, and thereby to impress on those powers which had hitherto neglected to form such treaties, the idea that some advantages were to be gained by a reciprocity of friendship.

That France had claims on the gratitude of the American people which ought not to be overlooked, was an additional argument in favour of the principle for which they contended.

The discrimination was opposed by Mr. Benson, Mr. Lawrence, Mr. Wadsworth and Mr. Sherman.

They did not admit that the public sentiment had been unequivocally expressed; nor did they admit that such benefits had flowed from commercial treaties as to justify a sacrifice of interest to obtain them. There was a commercial treaty with France; but neither that treaty, nor the favours shown to that nation, had produced any correspondent advantages. The license to sell ships could not be of this description, since it was well known that the merchants of the United States did not own vessels enough for the transportation of the produce of the country, and only two, as was believed, had been sold since the license had been granted. The trade with Great Britain, viewed in all its parts, was upon a footing as beneficial to the United States as that with France.

That the latter power had claims upon the gratitude of America was admitted, but that these claims would justify premiums for the encouragement of French commerce and navigation, to be drawn from the pockets of the American people, was not conceded. The state of the revenue, it was said, would not admit of these experiments.

The observation founded on the extensiveness of the trade between the United States and Great Britain was answered by saying, that this was not a subject proper for legislative interposition. It was one of which the merchants were the best judges. They would consult their interest as individuals; and this was a case in which the interest of the nation and of individuals was the same.

At length, the bills passed the house of representatives, and were carried to the senate, where they were amended by expunging the discrimination made in favour of the tonnage and distilled spirits of those nations which had formed commercial treaties with the United States.

These amendments were disagreed to; and each house insisting on its opinion, a conference took place, after which the point was reluctantly yielded by the house of representatives. The proceedings of the senate being at that time conducted with closed doors, the course of reasoning on which this important principle was rejected can not be stated.

This debate on the impost and tonnage bills was succeeded by one on a subject which was believed to involve principles of still greater interest.

In organising the departments of the executive, the question in what manner the high officers who filled them should be removeable, came on to be discussed. Believing that the decision of this question would materially influence the character of the new government, the members supported their respective opinions with a degree of earnestness proportioned to the importance they attributed to the measure. In a committee of the whole house on the bill "to establish an executive department to be denominated the[1] department of foreign affairs," Mr. White moved to strike out the clause which declared the secretary to be removeable by the President. The power of removal, where no express provision existed, was, he said, in the nature of things, incidental to that of appointment. And as the senate was, by the constitution, associated with the President in making appointments, that body must, in the same degree, participate in the power of removing from office.

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[1] This has since been denominated the department of state.

Mr. White was supported by Mr. Smith of South Carolina, Mr. Page, Mr. Stone, and Mr. Jackson.

Those gentlemen contended that the clause was either unnecessary or improper. If the constitution gave the power to the President, a repetition of the grant in an act of congress was nugatory; if the constitution did not give it, the attempt to confer it by law was improper. If it belonged conjointly to the President and senate, the house of representatives should not attempt to abridge the constitutional prerogative of the other branch of the legislature. However this might be, they were clearly of opinion that it was not placed in the President alone. In the power over all the executive officers which the bill proposed to confer upon the President, the most alarming dangers to liberty were perceived. It was in the nature of monarchical prerogative, and would convert them into the mere tools and creatures of his will. A dependence so servile on one individual, would deter men of high and honourable minds from engaging in the public service; and if, contrary to expectation, such men should be brought into office, they would be reduced to the necessity of sacrificing every principle of independence to the will of the chief magistrate, or of exposing themselves to the disgrace of being removed from office, and that too at a time when it might be no longer in their power to engage in other pursuits.

Gentlemen they feared were too much dazzled with the splendour of the virtues which adorned the actual President, to be able to look into futurity. But the framers of the constitution had not confined their views to the person who would most probably first fill the presidential chair. The house of representatives ought to follow their example, and to contemplate this power in the hands of an ambitious man, who might apply it to dangerous purposes; who might from caprice remove the most worthy men from office.

By the friends of the original bill, the amendment was opposed with arguments of great force drawn from the constitution and from general convenience. On several parts of the constitution, and especially on that which vests the executive power in the President, they relied confidently to support the position, that, in conformity with that instrument, the power in question could reside only with the chief magistrate: no power, it was said, could be more completely executive in its nature than that of removal from office.

But if it was a case on which the constitution was silent, the clearest principles of political expediency required that neither branch of the legislature should participate in it.

The danger that a President could ever be found who would remove good men from office, was treated as imaginary. It was not by the splendour attached to the character of the present chief magistrate alone that this opinion was to be defended. It was founded on the structure of the office. The man in whose favour a majority of the people of this continent would unite, had probability at least in favour of his principles; in addition to which, the public odium that would inevitably attach to such conduct, would be an effectual security against it.

After an ardent discussion which consumed several days, the committee divided: and the amendment was negatived by a majority of thirty-four to twenty. The opinion thus expressed by the house of representatives did not explicitly convey their sense of the constitution. Indeed the express grant of the power to the President, rather implied a right in the legislature to give or withhold it at their discretion. To obviate any misunderstanding of the principle on which the question had been decided, Mr. Benson moved in the house, when the report of the committee of the whole was taken up, to amend the second clause in the bill so as clearly to imply the power of removal to be solely in the President. He gave notice that if he should succeed in this, he would move to strike out the words which had been the subject of debate. If those words continued, he said the power of removal by the President might hereafter appear to be exercised by virtue of a legislative grant only, and consequently be subjected to legislative instability; when he was well satisfied in his own mind, that it was by fair construction, fixed in the constitution. The motion was seconded by Mr. Madison, and both amendments were adopted. As the bill passed into a law, it has ever been considered as a full expression of the sense of the legislature on this important part of the American constitution.

The bill to establish the treasury department, contained a clause making it the duty of the secretary "to digest and report plans for the improvement and management of the revenue, and for the support of public credit."

Mr. Page moved to strike out these words, observing, that to permit the secretary to go further than to prepare estimates would be a dangerous innovation on the constitutional privilege of that house. It would create an undue influence within those walls, because members might be led by the deference commonly paid to men of abilities, who gave an opinion in a case they have thoroughly considered, to support the plan of the minister even against their own judgment. Nor would the mischief stop there. A precedent would be established which might be extended until ministers of the government should be admitted on that floor, to explain and support the plans they had digested and reported, thereby laying a foundation for an aristocracy, or a detestable monarchy.

Mr. Tucker seconded the motion of Mr. Page, and observed, that the authority contained in the bill to prepare and report plans would create an interference of the executive with the legislative powers, and would abridge the particular privilege of that house to originate all bills for raising a revenue. How could the business originate in that house, if it was reported to them by the minister of finance? All the information that could be required might be called for without adopting a clause that might undermine the authority of the house, and the security of the people. The constitution has pointed out the proper method of communication between the executive and legislative departments. It is made the duty of the President to give from time to time information to congress of the state of the union, and to recommend to their consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient. If revenue plans are to be prepared and reported to congress, he is the proper person to perform this service. He is responsible to the people for what he recommends, and will be more cautious than any other person to whom a less degree of responsibility was attached.

He hoped the house was not already weary of executing and sustaining the powers vested in them by the constitution; and yet the adoption of this clause would argue that they thought themselves less adequate than an individual, to determine what burdens their constituents were able to bear. This was not answering the high expectations that had been formed of their exertions for the general good, or of their vigilance in guarding their own and the people's rights.

The arguments of Mr. Page and Mr. Tucker were enforced and enlarged by Mr. Livermore and Mr. Gerry. The latter gentleman said, "that he had no objection to obtaining information, but he could not help observing the great degree of importance gentlemen were giving to this and the other executive officers. If the doctrine of having prime and great ministers of state was once well established, he did not doubt but he should soon see them distinguished by a green or red ribbon, insignia of court favour and patronage."

It was contended that the plans of the secretary, being digested would be received entire. Members would be informed that each part was necessary to the whole, and that nothing could be touched without injuring the system. Establish this doctrine, and congress would become a useless burden.

The amendment was opposed by Mr. Benson, Mr. Goodhue, Mr. Ames, Mr. Sedgewick, Mr. Boudinot, Mr. Lawrence, Mr. Madison, Mr. Stone, Mr. Sherman, and Mr. Baldwin. It was insisted that to prepare and report plans for the improvement of the revenue, and support of public credit, constituted the most important service which could be rendered by the officer who should be placed at the head of the department of finance. When the circumstances under which the members of that house were assembled, and the various objects for which they were convened were considered, it was no imputation upon them to suppose that they might receive useful information from a person whose peculiar duty it was to direct his attention to systems of finance, and who would be in some measure selected on account of his fitness for that object. It was denied that the privileges of the house would be infringed by the measure. The plans of the secretary could not be termed bills, nor would they even be reported in that form. They would only constitute information which would be valuable, and which could not be received in a more eligible mode. "Certainly," said Mr. Goodhue, "we carry our dignity to the extreme, when we refuse to receive information from any but ourselves."

"If we consider the present situation of our finances," said Mr. Ames, "owing to a variety of causes, we shall no doubt perceive a great though unavoidable confusion throughout the whole scene. It presents to the imagination a deep, dark, and dreary chaos, impossible to be reduced to order, unless the mind of the architect be clear and capacious, and his power commensurate to the object. He must not be the flitting creature of the day; he must have time given him competent to the successful exercise of his authority. It is with the intention of letting a little sunshine into the business, that the present arrangement is proposed."

It was not admitted that the plans of the secretary would possess an influence to which their intrinsic value would not give them a just claim. There would always be sufficient intelligence in that house to detect, and independence to expose any oppressive or injurious scheme which might be prepared for them. Nor would a plan openly and officially reported possess more influence on the mind of any member, than if given privately at the secretary's office.

Mr. Madison said, the words of the bill were precisely those used by the former congress on two occasions. The same power had been annexed to the office of superintendent of the finances; and he had never heard that any inconvenience had been experienced from the regulation. Perhaps if the power had been more fully and more frequently exercised, it might have contributed more to the public good. "There is," continued this gentleman, "a small probability, though it is but small, that an officer may derive weight from this circumstance, and have some degree of influence upon the deliberations of the legislature. But compare the danger likely to result from this cause, with the danger and inconvenience of not having well formed and digested plans, and we shall find infinitely more to apprehend from the latter. Inconsistent, unproductive, and expensive schemes, will produce greater injury to our constituents, than is to be apprehended from any undue influence which the well digested plans of a well informed officer can have. From a bad administration of the government, more detriment will arise than from any other source. Want of information has occasioned much inconvenience, and many unnecessary burdens in some of the state governments. Let it be our care to avoid those rocks and shoals in our political voyage which have injured, and nearly proved fatal to many of our contemporary navigators."

The amendment was rejected.

Among the interesting points which were settled in the first congress, was the question by what style the President and Vice President should be addressed. Mr. Benson, from the committee appointed to confer with a committee of the senate on this subject reported, "that it is not proper to annex any style or title to the respective styles or titles of office expressed in the constitution;" and this report was, without opposition, agreed to in the house of representatives. In the senate, the report was disapproved, and a resolution passed requesting the house of representatives to appoint another committee, again to confer with one from the senate, on the same subject. This message being taken up in the house of representatives, a resolution was moved by Mr. Parker, seconded by Mr. Page, declaring that it would be improper to accede to the request of the senate. Several members were in favour of this motion; but others who were opposed to receding from the ground already taken, seemed inclined to appoint a committee as a measure properly respectful to the other branch of the legislature.

After a warm debate, the resolution proposed by Mr. Parker was set aside by the previous question, and a committee of conference was appointed. They could not agree upon a report, in consequence of which the subject was permitted to rest; and the senate, conforming to the precedent given by the house of representatives, addressed the President in their answer to his speech by the terms used in the constitution.

While the representatives were preparing bills for organizing the great executive departments, the senate was occupied with digesting the system of a national judiciary. This complex and extensive subject was taken up in the commencement of the session, and was completed towards its close.

In the course of this session Mr. Madison brought forward a proposition for recommending to the consideration and adoption of the states, several new articles to be added to the constitution.

Many of those objections to it which had been urged with all the vehemence of conviction, and which, in the opinion of some of its advocates, were entitled to serious consideration, were believed by the most intelligent to derive their sole support from an erroneous construction of the instrument. Others were upon points on which the objectors might be gratified without injury to the system. To conciliate the affections of their brethren to the government, was an object greatly desired by its friends. Disposed to respect, what they deemed, the errors of their opponents, where that respect could be manifested without a sacrifice of essential principles, they were anxious to annex to the constitution those explanations and barriers against the possible encroachments of rulers on the liberties of the people, which had been loudly demanded, however unfounded, in their judgments, might be the fears by which those demands were suggested. These dispositions were perhaps, in some measure, stimulated to exertion by motives of the soundest policy. The formidable minorities in several of the conventions, which in the legislatures of some powerful states had become majorities, and the refusal of two states to complete the union, were admonitions not to be disregarded, of the necessity of removing jealousies, however misplaced, which operated on so large a portion of society. Among the most zealous friends of the constitution therefore, were found some of the first and warmest advocates for amendments.

To meet the various ideas expressed by the several conventions; to select from the mass of alterations which they had proposed those which might be adopted without stripping the government of its necessary powers; to condense them into a form and compass which would be acceptable to persons disposed to indulge the caprice, and to adopt the language of their particular states; were labours not easily to be accomplished. But the greatest difficulty to be surmounted was, the disposition to make those alterations which would enfeeble, and materially injure, the future operations of the government. At length, ten articles in addition to and amendment of the constitution, were assented to by two-thirds of both houses of congress, and proposed to the legislatures of the several states. Although the necessity of these amendments had been urged by the enemies of the constitution, and denied by its friends, they encountered scarcely any other opposition in the state legislatures, than was given by the leaders of the anti-federal party. Admitting the articles to be good and necessary, it was contended that they were not sufficient for the security of liberty; and the apprehension was avowed that their adoption would quiet the fears of the people, and check the pursuit of those radical alterations which would afford a safe and adequate protection to their rights. They were at length ratified by the legislatures of three-fourths of the states, and probably contributed, in some degree, to diminish the jealousies which had been imbibed against the constitution.

The government being completely organized, and a system of revenue established, the important duty of filling the offices which had been created, remained to be performed. In the execution of this delicate trust, the purest virtue and the most impartial judgment were exercised in selecting the best talents, and the greatest weight of character, which the United States could furnish. The unmingled patriotism of the motives by which the President was actuated, would receive its clearest demonstration from a view of all his private letters on this subject: and the success of his endeavours is attested by the abilities and reputation which he drew into the public service.

At the head of the department of foreign affairs, since denominated the department of state, he placed Mr. Jefferson.

This gentleman had been bred to the bar, and at an early period of life, had acquired considerable reputation for extensive attainments in the science of politics. He had been a distinguished member of the second congress, and had been offered a diplomatic appointment, which he had declined. Withdrawing from the administration of continental affairs, he had been elected governor of Virginia, which office he filled for two years. He afterwards again represented his native state in the councils of the union, and in the year 1784, was appointed to succeed Dr. Franklin at the court of Versailles. In that station, he had acquitted himself much to the public satisfaction. His Notes on Virginia, which were read with applause, were believed to evince the soundness of his political opinions; and the Declaration of Independence was universally ascribed to his pen. He had long been placed by America amongst the most eminent of her citizens, and had long been classed by the President with those who were most capable of serving the nation. Having lately obtained permission to return for a short time to the United States, he was, while on his passage, nominated to this important office; and, on his arrival in Virginia, found a letter from the President, giving him the option of becoming the secretary of foreign affairs, or of retaining his station at the court of Versailles. He appears rather to have inclined to continue in his foreign appointment; and, in changing his situation, to have consulted the wishes of the first magistrate more than the preference of his own mind.

The task of restoring public credit, of drawing order and arrangement from the chaotic confusion in which the finances of America were involved, and of devising means which should render the revenue productive, and commensurate with the demand, in a manner least burdensome to the people, was justly classed among the most arduous of the duties which devolved on the new government. In discharging it, much aid was expected from the head of the treasury. This important, and, at that time, intricate department, was assigned to Colonel Hamilton.

This gentleman was a native of the island of St. Croix, and, at a very early period of life, had been placed by his friends, in New York. Possessing an ardent temper, he caught fire from the concussions of the moment, and, with all the enthusiasm of youth, engaged first his pen, and afterwards his sword, in the stern contest between the American colonies and their parent state. Among the first troops raised by New York was a corps of artillery, in which he was appointed a captain. Soon after the war was transferred to the Hudson, his superior endowments recommended him to the attention of the Commander-in-chief, into whose family, before completing his twenty-first year, he was invited to enter. Equally brave and intelligent, he continued, in this situation, to display a degree of firmness and capacity which commanded the confidence and esteem of his general, and of the principal officers in the army.

After the capitulation at Yorktown, the war languished throughout the American continent, and the probability that its termination was approaching daily increased.

The critical circumstances of the existing government rendered the events of the civil, more interesting than those of the military department; and Colonel Hamilton accepted a seat in the congress of the United States. In all the important acts of the day, he performed a conspicuous part; and was greatly distinguished among those distinguished men whom the crisis had attracted to the councils of their country. He had afterwards been active in promoting those measures which led to the convention at Philadelphia, of which he was a member, and had greatly contributed to the adoption of the constitution by the state of New York. In the pre-eminent part he had performed, both in the military and civil transactions of his country, he had acquired a great degree of well merited fame; and the frankness of his manners, the openness of his temper, the warmth of his feelings, and the sincerity of his heart, had secured him many valuable friends.

To talents equally splendid and useful, he united a patient industry, not always the companion of genius, which fitted him, in a peculiar manner, for subduing the difficulties to be encountered by the man who should be placed at the head of the American finances.

The department of war was already filled by General Knox, and he was again nominated to it.

Throughout the contest of the revolution, this officer had continued at the head of the American artillery, and from being the colonel of a regiment, had been promoted to the rank of a major general. In this important station, he had preserved a high military character; and, on the resignation of General Lincoln, had been appointed secretary of war. To his past services, and to unquestionable integrity, he was admitted to unite a sound understanding; and the public judgment, as well as that of the chief magistrate, pronounced him in all respects competent to the station he filled.

The office of attorney general was filled by Mr. Edmund Randolph. To a distinguished reputation in the line of his profession, this gentleman added a considerable degree of political eminence. After having been for several years the attorney-general of Virginia, he had been elected its governor. While in this office, he was chosen a member of the convention which framed the constitution, and was also elected to that which was called by the state for its adoption or rejection. After having served at the head of the executive the term permitted by the constitution of the state, he entered into its legislature, where he preserved a great share of influence.

Such was the first cabinet council of the President. In its composition, public opinion as well as intrinsic worth had been consulted, and a high degree of character had been combined with real talent.

In the selection of persons for high judicial offices, the President was guided by the same principles. At the head of this department he placed Mr. John Jay.

From the commencement of the revolution, this gentleman had filled a large space in the public mind. Remaining, without intermission, in the service of his country, he had passed through a succession of high offices, and, in all of them, had merited the approbation of his fellow citizens. To his pen, while in congress, America was indebted for some of those masterly addresses which reflected most honour upon the government; and to his firmness and penetration, was to be ascribed, in no inconsiderable degree, the happy issue of those intricate negotiations, which were conducted, towards the close of the war, at Madrid, and at Paris. On returning to the United States, he had been appointed secretary of foreign affairs, in which station he had conducted himself with his accustomed ability. A sound judgment improved by extensive reading and great knowledge of public affairs, unyielding firmness, and inflexible integrity, were qualities of which Mr. Jay had given frequent and signal proofs. Although for some years withdrawn from that profession to which he was bred, the acquisitions of his early life had not been lost; and the subjects on which his mind had been exercised, were not entirely foreign from those which would, in the first instance, employ the courts in which he was to preside.

John Rutledge of South Carolina, James Wilson of Pennsylvania, William Cushing of Massachusetts, Robert Harrison of Maryland, and John Blair of Virginia were nominated as associate justices. Some of these gentlemen had filled the highest law offices in their respective states; and all of them had received distinguished marks of the public confidence.

In the systems which had been adopted by the several states, offices corresponding to those created by the revenue laws of congress, had been already established. Uninfluenced by considerations of personal regard, the President could not be induced to change men whom he found in place, if worthy of being employed; and where the man who had filled such office in the former state of things was unexceptionable in his conduct and character, he was uniformly re-appointed. In deciding between competitors for vacant offices, the law he prescribed for his government was to regard the fitness of candidates for the duties they would be required to discharge; and, where an equality in this respect existed, former merits and sufferings in the public service, gave claims to preference which could not be overlooked.

In the legislative, as well as in the executive and judicial departments, great respectability of character was also associated with an eminent degree of talents. The constitutional prohibition to appoint any member of the legislature to an office created during the time for which he had been elected, did not exclude men of the most distinguished abilities from the first congress. Impelled by an anxious solicitude respecting the first measures of the government, its zealous friends had pressed into its service: and, in both branches of the legislature, men were found who possessed the fairest claims to the public confidence.

From the duties attached to his office, the Vice President of the United States, and President of the senate, though not a member of the legislature, was classed, in the public mind, with that department not less than with the executive. Elected by the whole people of America in common with the President, he could not fail to be taken from the most distinguished citizens, and to add to the dignity of the body over which he presided.

Mr. John Adams was one of the earliest and most ardent patriots of the revolution. Bred to the bar, he had necessarily studied the constitution of his country, and was among the most determined assertors of its rights. Active in guiding that high spirit which animated all New England, he became a member of the congress of 1774, and was among the first who dared to avow sentiments in favour of independence. In that body he soon attained considerable eminence; and, at an early stage of the war, was chosen one of the commissioners to whom the interests of the United States in Europe were confided. In his diplomatic character, he had contributed greatly to those measures which drew Holland into the war; had negotiated the treaty between the United States and the Dutch republic: and had, at critical points of time, obtained loans of money which were of great advantage to his country. In the negotiations which terminated the war, he had also rendered important services; and, after the ratification of the definitive articles of peace, had been deputed to Great Britain for the purpose of effecting a commercial treaty with that nation. The political situation of America having rendered this object unattainable, he solicited leave to return, and arrived in the United States soon after the adoption of the constitution.

As a statesman, this gentleman had, at all times, ranked high in the estimation of his countrymen. He had improved a sound understanding by extensive political and historical reading; and perhaps no American had reflected more profoundly on the subject of government. The exalted opinion he entertained of his own country was flattering to his fellow citizens; and the purity of his mind, the unblemished integrity of a life spent in the public service, had gained him their confidence.

A government, supported in all its departments by so much character and talent, at the head of which was placed a man whose capacity was undoubted, whose life had been one great and continued lesson of disinterested patriotism, and for whom almost every bosom glowed with an attachment bordering on enthusiasm, could not fail to make a rapid progress in conciliating the affection of the people. That all hostility to the constitution should subside, that public measures should receive universal approbation; that no particular disgusts and individual irritations should be excited; were expectations which could not reasonably be indulged. Exaggerated accounts were indeed occasionally circulated of the pomp and splendour which were affected by certain high officers, of the monarchical tendencies of particular institutions, and of the dispositions which prevailed to increase the powers of the executive. That the doors of the senate were closed, and that a disposition had been manifested by that body to distinguish the President of the United States by a title,[1] gave considerable umbrage, and were represented as evincing inclinations in that branch of the legislature, unfriendly to republicanism. The exorbitance of salaries was also a subject of some declamation, and the equality of commercial privileges with which foreign bottoms entered American ports, was not free from objection. But the apprehensions of danger to liberty from the new system, which had been impressed on the minds of well meaning men, were visibly wearing off; the popularity of the administration was communicating itself to the government; and the materials with which the discontented were furnished, could not yet be efficaciously employed.

Towards the close of the session, a report on a petition which had been presented at an early period by the creditors of the public residing in the state of Pennsylvania, was taken up in the house of representatives. Though many considerations rendered a postponement of this interesting subject necessary, two resolutions were passed; the one, "declaring that the house considered an adequate provision for the support of the public credit, as a matter of high importance to the national honour and prosperity;" and the other directing, "the secretary of the treasury to prepare a plan for that purpose, and to report the same to the house at its next meeting."

On the 29th of September, congress adjourned to the first Monday in the succeeding January.

Throughout the whole of this laborious and important session, perfect harmony subsisted between the executive and the legislature; and no circumstance occurred which threatened to impair it. The modes of communication between the departments of government were adjusted in a satisfactory manner, and arrangements were made on some of those delicate points in which the senate participates with the executive power.

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[1] The following extract from a letter written July 1789, to Doctor Stuart, who had communicated to him this among other private insinuations, shows the ideas entertained by the President on this subject. "It is to be lamented that a question has been stirred which has given rise to so much animadversion, and which I confess has given me much uneasiness, lest it should be supposed by some unacquainted with facts that the object in view was not displeasing to me. The truth is, the question was moved before I arrived, without any privity or knowledge of it on my part, and urged after I was apprised of it contrary to my opinion;—for I foresaw and predicted the reception it has met with, and the use that would be made of it by the enemies of the government. Happily the matter is now done with, I hope never to be revived."

Anxious to visit New England, to observe in person the condition of the country and the dispositions of the people towards the government and its measures, the President was disposed to avail himself of the short respite from official cares afforded by the recess of congress, to make a tour through the eastern states. His resolution being taken, and the executive business which required his immediate personal attendance being despatched,[1] he commenced his tour on the 15th of October; and, passing through Connecticut and Massachusetts, as far as Portsmouth in New Hampshire, returned by a different route to New York, where he arrived on the 13th of November.

With this visit, the President had much reason to be satisfied. To contemplate the theatre on which many interesting military scenes had been exhibited, and to review the ground on which his first campaign as Commander-in-chief of the American army had been made, were sources of rational delight. To observe the progress of society, the improvements in agriculture, commerce, and manufactures; and the temper, circumstances and dispositions of the people, could not fail to be grateful to an intelligent mind, and an employment in all respects, worthy of the chief magistrate of the nation. The reappearance of their general, in the high station he now filled, brought back to recollection the perilous transactions of the war; and the reception universally given to him, attested the unabated love which was felt for his person and character, and indicated unequivocally the growing popularity, at least in that part of the union, of the government he administered.

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[1] Just before his departure from New York the President received from the Count de Moustiers, the minister of France, official notice that he was permitted by his court to return to Europe. By the orders of his sovereign he added, "that his majesty was pleased at the alteration which had taken place in the government, and congratulated America on the choice they had made of a President." As from himself, he observed that the government of this country had been hitherto of so fluctuating a nature, that no dependence could be placed on its proceedings; in consequence of which foreign nations had been cautious of entering into treaties, or engagements of any kind with the United States: but that in the present government there was a head to look up to, and power being placed in the hands of its officers, stability in its measures might be expected.

The dispositions of his christian majesty to cultivate the good will of the new government was also manifested by his conduct in the choice of a minister to replace the Count de Moustiers. Colonel Ternan was named as a person who would be particularly acceptable to America, and his appointment was preceded by the compliment of ascertaining the sense of the President respecting him.

The sincerity and warmth with which he reciprocated the affection expressed for his person in the addresses presented to him, was well calculated to preserve the sentiments which were generally diffused. "I rejoice with you my fellow citizens," said he in answer to an address from the inhabitants of Boston, "in every circumstance that declares your prosperity;—and I do so most cordially because you have well deserved to be happy.

"Your love of liberty—your respect for the laws—your habits of industry—and your practice of the moral and religious obligations, are the strongest claims to national and individual happiness. And they will, I trust, be firmly and lastingly established."

But the interchange of sentiments with the companions of his military toils and glory, will excite most interest, because on both sides, the expressions were dictated by the purest and most delicious feelings of the human heart. From the Cincinnati of Massachusetts he received the following address:

"Amidst the various gratulations which your arrival in this metropolis has occasioned, permit us, the members of the society of the Cincinnati in this commonwealth, most respectfully to assure you of the ardour of esteem and affection you have so indelibly fixed in our hearts, as our glorious leader in war, and illustrious example in peace.

"After the solemn and endearing farewell on the banks of the Hudson, which our anxiety presaged as final, most peculiarly pleasing is the present unexpected meeting. On this occasion we can not avoid the recollection of the various scenes of toil and danger through which you conducted us; and while we contemplate various trying periods of the war, and the triumphs of peace, we rejoice to behold you, induced by the unanimous voice of your country, entering upon other trials, and other services alike important, and, in some points of view, equally hazardous. For the completion of the great purposes which a grateful country has assigned you, long, very long, may your invaluable life be preserved. And as the admiring world, while considering you as a soldier, have long wanted a comparison, may your virtue and talents as a statesman leave them without a parallel.

"It is not in words to express an attachment founded like ours. We can only say that when soldiers, our greatest pride was a promptitude of obedience to your orders; as citizens, our supreme ambition is to maintain the character of firm supporters of that noble fabric of federal government over which you preside.

"As members of the society of the Cincinnati, it will be our endeavour to cherish those sacred principles of charity and fraternal attachment which our institution inculcates. And while our conduct is thus regulated, we can never want the patronage of the first of patriots and the best of men."

To this address the following answer was returned:

"In reciprocating with gratitude and sincerity the multiplied and affecting gratulations of my fellow citizens of this commonwealth, they will all of them with justice allow me to say, that none can be dearer to me than the affectionate assurances which you have expressed. Dear, indeed, is the occasion which restores an intercourse with my faithful associates in prosperous and adverse fortune; and enhanced are the triumphs of peace, participated with those whose virtue and valour so largely contributed to procure them. To that virtue and valour your country has confessed her obligations. Be mine the grateful task to add the testimony of a connexion which it was my pride to own in the field, and is now my happiness to acknowledge in the enjoyments of peace and freedom.

"Regulating your conduct by those principles which have heretofore governed your actions as men, soldiers, and citizens, you will repeat the obligations conferred on your country, and you will transmit to posterity an example that must command their admiration and grateful praise. Long may you continue to enjoy the endearments of fraternal attachments, and the heartfelt happiness of reflecting that you have faithfully done your duty.

"While I am permitted to possess the consciousness of this worth, which has long bound me to you by every tie of affection and esteem, I will continue to be your sincere and faithful friend."

Soon after his return to New York, the President was informed of the ill success which had attended his first attempt to negotiate a peace with the Creek Indians. General Lincoln, Mr. Griffin, and Colonel Humphries, had been deputed on this mission, and had met M'Gillivray with several other chiefs, and about two thousand men, at Rock landing, on the Oconee, on the frontiers of Georgia. The treaty commenced with favourable appearances, but was soon abruptly broken off by M'Gillivray. Some difficulties arose on the subject of a boundary, but the principal obstacles to a peace were supposed to grow out of his personal interests, and his connexions with Spain.

This intelligence was more than counterbalanced by the accession of North Carolina to the union. In the month of November, a second convention had met under the authority of the legislature of that state, and the constitution was adopted by a great majority.

CHAPTER VI

On the eighth of January, 1790, the President met both houses of congress in the senate chamber.

In his speech, which was delivered from the chair of the vice president, after congratulating congress on the accession of the important state of North Carolina to the union, and on the prosperous aspect of American affairs, he proceeded to recommend certain great objects of legislation to their more especial consideration.

"Among the many interesting objects," continued the speech, "which will engage your attention, that of providing for the common defence will merit your particular regard. To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace.

"A free people ought not only to be armed but disciplined; to which end, a uniform and well digested plan is requisite; and their safety and interest require that they should promote such manufactories as tend to render them independent on others for essential, particularly for military supplies."

As connected with this subject, a proper establishment for the troops which they might deem indispensable, was suggested for their mature deliberation; and the indications of a hostile temper given by several tribes of Indians, were considered as admonishing them of the necessity of being prepared to afford protection to the frontiers, and to punish aggression.

The interests of the United States were declared to require that the means of keeping up their intercourse with foreign nations should be provided; and the expediency of establishing a uniform rule of naturalization was suggested.

After expressing his confidence in their attention to many improvements essential to the prosperity of the interior, the President added, "nor am I less persuaded that you will agree with me in opinion that there is nothing which can better deserve your patronage than the promotion of science and literature. Knowledge is in every country the surest basis of public happiness. In one, in which the measures of government receive their impression so immediately from the sense of the community as in ours, it is proportionably essential. To the security of a free constitution it contributes in various ways: by convincing those who are intrusted with the public administration, that every valuable end of government is best answered by the enlightened confidence of the people; and by teaching the people themselves to know and to value their own rights; to discern and provide against invasions of them; to distinguish between oppression and the necessary exercise of lawful authority; between burdens proceeding from a disregard to their convenience, and those resulting from the inevitable exigencies of society; to discriminate the spirit of liberty from that of licentiousness, cherishing the first, avoiding the last, and uniting a speedy but temperate vigilance against encroachments, with an inviolable respect to the laws.

"Whether this desirable object will be best promoted by affording aids to seminaries of learning already established, by the institution of a national university, or by any other expedients, will be well worthy of a place in the deliberations of the legislature."

Addressing himself then particularly to the representatives, he said, "I saw with peculiar pleasure at the close of the last session, the resolution entered into by you, expressive of your opinion, that an adequate provision for the support of the public credit is a matter of high importance to the national honour and prosperity. In this sentiment I entirely concur; and to a perfect confidence in your best endeavours to devise such a provision as will be truly consistent with the end, I add an equal reliance on the cheerful co-operation of the other branch of the legislature. It would be superfluous to specify inducements to a measure in which the character and permanent interests of the United States are so obviously and so deeply concerned; and which has received so explicit a sanction from your declaration."

Addressing himself again to both houses, he observed, that the estimates and papers respecting the objects particularly recommended to their attention would be laid before them; and concluded with saying, "the welfare of our country is the great object to which our cares and efforts ought to be directed: and I shall derive great satisfaction from a co-operation with you in the pleasing though arduous task of insuring to our fellow citizens the blessings which they have a right to expect from a free, efficient, and equal government."

The answers of both houses were indicative of the harmony which subsisted between the executive and legislative departments.

Congress had been so occupied during its first session with those bills which were necessary to bring the new system into full operation, and to create an immediate revenue, that some measures which possessed great and pressing claims to immediate attention had been unavoidably deferred. That neglect under which the creditors of the public had been permitted to languish could not fail to cast an imputation on the American republics, which had been sincerely lamented by the wisest among those who administered the former government. The power to comply substantially with the engagements of the United States being at length conferred on those who were bound by them, it was confidently expected by the friends of the constitution that their country would retrieve its reputation, and that its fame would no longer be tarnished with the blots which stain a faithless people.

On the 9th of January, a letter from the secretary of the treasury to the speaker of the house of representatives was read, stating that in obedience to the resolution of the 21st of September, he had prepared a plan for the support of public credit, which he was ready to report when the house should be pleased to receive it; and, after a short debate in which the personal attendance of the secretary for the purpose of making explanations was urged by some, and opposed by others, it was resolved that the report should be received in writing on the succeeding Thursday.

Availing himself of the latitude afforded by the terms of the resolution under which he acted, the secretary had introduced into his report an able and comprehensive argument elucidating and supporting the principles it contained. After displaying, with strength and perspicuity, the justice and the policy of an adequate provision for the public debt, he proceeded to discuss the principles on which it should be made.

"It was agreed," he said, "by all, that the foreign debt should be provided for according to the precise terms of the contract. It was to be regretted that, with respect to the domestic debt, the same unanimity of sentiment did not prevail."

The first point on which the public appeared to be divided, involved the question, "whether a discrimination ought not to be made between original holders of the public securities, and present possessors by purchase." After reviewing the arguments generally urged in its support, the secretary declared himself against this discrimination. He deemed it "equally unjust and impolitic; highly injurious even to the original holders of public securities, and ruinous to public credit." To the arguments with which he enforced these opinions, he added the authority of the government of the union. From the circular address of congress to the states, of the 26th of April, 1783, accompanying their revenue system of the 18th of the same month, passages were selected indicating unequivocally, that in the view of that body the original creditors, and those who had become so by assignment, had equal claims upon the nation.

After reasoning at great length against a discrimination between the different creditors of the union, the secretary proceeded to examine whether a difference ought to be permitted to remain between them and the creditors of individual states.

"Both descriptions of debt were contracted for the same objects, and were in the main the same. Indeed, a great part of the particular debts of the states had arisen from assumptions by them on account of the union; and it was most equitable that there should be the same measure of retribution for all." There were many reasons, some of which were stated, for believing this would not be the case, unless the state debts should be assumed by the nation.

In addition to the injustice of favouring one class of creditors more than another which was equally meritorious, many arguments were urged in support of the policy of distributing to all with an equal hand from the same source.

After an elaborate discussion of these and some other points connected with the subject, the secretary proposed that a loan should be opened to the full amount of the debt, as well of the particular states, as of the union.

The terms to be offered were,—

First. That for every one hundred dollars subscribed payable in the debt, as well interest as principal, the subscriber should be entitled to have two-thirds funded on a yearly interest of six per cent. (the capital redeemable at the pleasure of government by the payment of the principal) and to receive the other third in lands of the western territory at their then actual value. Or,

Secondly. To have the whole sum funded at a yearly interest of four per cent., irredeemable by any payment exceeding five dollars per annum both on account of principal and interest, and to receive as a compensation for the reduction of interest, fifteen dollars and eighty cents, payable in lands as in the preceding case. Or,

Thirdly. To have sixty-six and two-thirds of a dollar funded at a yearly interest of six per cent., irredeemable also by any payment exceeding four dollars and two-thirds of a dollar per annum on account both of principal and interest, and to have at the end of ten years twenty-six dollars and eighty-eight cents funded at the like interest and rate of redemption.

In addition to these propositions the creditors were to have an option of vesting their money in annuities on different plans; and it was also recommended to open a loan at five per cent. for ten millions of dollars, payable one half in specie, and the other half in the debt, irredeemable by any payment exceeding six dollars per annum both of principal and interest.

By way of experiment, a tontine on principles stated in the report was also suggested.

The secretary was restrained from proposing to fund the whole debt immediately at the current rate of interest, by the opinion, "that although such a provision might not exceed the abilities of the country, it would require the extension of taxation to a degree, and to objects which the true interest of the creditors themselves would forbid. It was therefore to be hoped and expected, that they would cheerfully concur in such modifications of their claims, on fair and equitable principles, as would facilitate to the government an arrangement substantial, durable, and satisfactory to the community. Exigencies might ere long arise which would call for resources greatly beyond what was now deemed sufficient for the current service; and should the faculties of the country be exhausted, or even strained to provide for the public debt, there could be less reliance on the sacredness of the provision.

"But while he yielded to the force of these considerations, he did not lose sight of those fundamental principles of good faith which dictate that every practicable exertion ought to be made, scrupulously to fulfil the engagements of the government; that no change in the rights of its creditors ought to be attempted without their voluntary consent; and that this consent ought to be voluntary in fact, as well as in name. Consequently, that every proposal of a change ought to be in the shape of an appeal to their reason and to their interest, not to their necessities. To this end it was requisite that a fair equivalent should be offered, for what might be asked to be given up, and unquestionable security for the remainder." This fair equivalent for the proposed reduction of interest was, he thought, offered in the relinquishment of the power to redeem the whole debt at pleasure.

That a free judgment might be exercised by the holders of public securities in accepting or rejecting the terms offered by the government, provision was made in the report for paying to non-subscribing creditors, a dividend of the surplus which should remain in the treasury after paying the interest of the proposed loans: but as the funds immediately to be provided, were calculated to produce only four per cent. on the entire debt, the dividend, for the present, was not to exceed that rate of interest.

To enable the treasury to support this increased demand upon it, an augmentation of the duties on imported wines, spirits, tea, and coffee, was proposed, and a duty on home made spirits was also recommended.

This celebrated report, which has been alike the fruitful theme of extravagant praise and bitter censure, merits the more attention, because the first regular and systematic opposition to the principles on which the affairs of the union were administered, originated in the measures which were founded on it.

On the 28th of January, this subject was taken up; and, after some animadversions on the speculations in the public debt to which the report, it was said, had already given birth, the business was postponed until the eighth of February, when it was again brought forward.

Several resolutions affirmative of the principles contained in the report, were moved by Mr. Fitzsimmons. To the first, which respected a provision for the foreign debt, the house agreed without a dissenting voice. The second, in favour of appropriating permanent funds for payment of the interest on the domestic debt, and for the gradual redemption of the principal, gave rise to a very animated debate.

Mr. Jackson declared his hostility to funding systems generally. To prove their pernicious influence, he appealed to the histories of Florence, Genoa, and Great Britain; and, contending that the subject ought to be deferred until North Carolina should be represented, moved, that the committee should rise. This question being decided in the negative, Mr. Scott declared the opinion that the United States were not bound to pay the domestic creditors the sums specified in the certificates of debts in their possession. He supported this opinion by urging, not that the public had received less value than was expressed on the face of the paper which had been issued, but that those to whom it had been delivered, by parting with it at two shillings and sixpence in the pound, had themselves fixed the value of their claims, and had manifested their willingness to add to their other sacrifices this deduction from their demand upon the nation. He therefore moved to amend the resolution before the committee so as to require a resettlement of the debt.

The amendment was opposed by Mr. Boudinot, Mr. Lawrence, Mr. Ames, Mr. Sherman, Mr. Hartley, and Mr. Goodhue. They stated at large the terms on which the debt had been contracted, and urged the confidence which the creditors had a right to place in the government for its discharge according to settlements already made, and acknowledgments already given. The idea that the legislative body could diminish an ascertained debt was reprobated with great force, as being at the same time unjust, impolitic, and subversive of every principle on which public contracts are founded. The evidences of debt possessed by the creditors of the United States were considered as public bonds, for the redemption of which the property and the labour of the people were pledged.

After the debate had been protracted to some length, the question was taken on Mr. Scott's amendment, and it passed in the negative.

Mr. Madison then rose, and, in an eloquent speech, replete with argument, proposed an amendment to the resolution, the effect of which was to discriminate between the public creditors, so as to pay the present holder of assignable paper the highest price it had borne in the market, and give the residue to the person with whom the debt was originally contracted. Where the original creditor had never parted with his claim, he was to receive the whole sum acknowledged to be due on the face of the certificate.

This motion was supported by Mr. Jackson, Mr. White, Mr. Moore, Mr. Page, Mr. Stone, Mr. Scott, and Mr. Seney.

It was opposed with great earnestness and strength of argument, by Mr. Sedgewick, Mr. Lawrence, Mr. Smith, of South Carolina, Mr. Ames, Mr. Gerry, Mr. Boudinot, Mr. Wadsworth, Mr. Goodhue, Mr. Hartley, Mr. Bland, Mr. Benson, Mr. Burke, and Mr. Livermore.

The argument was ably supported on both sides, was long, animated, and interesting. At length the question was put, and the amendment was rejected by a great majority.

This discussion deeply engaged the public attention. The proposition was new and interesting. That the debt ought to be diminished for the public advantage, was an opinion which had frequently been advanced, and was maintained by many. But a reduction from the claims of its present holders for the benefit of those who had sold their rights, was a measure which saved nothing to the public purse, and was therefore recommended only by considerations, the operation of which can never be very extensive. Against it were arranged all who had made purchases, and a great majority of those who conceived that sound policy and honest dealing require a literal observance of public contracts.

Although the decision of congress against a discrimination in favour of the original creditor produced no considerable sensation, the determination on that part of the secretary's report which was the succeeding subject of deliberation, affecting political interests and powers which are never to be approached without danger, seemed to unchain all those fierce passions which a high respect for the government and for those who administered it, had in a great measure restrained.

The manner in which the several states entered into and conducted the war of the revolution, will be recollected. Acting in some respects separately, and in others conjointly, for the attainment of a common object, their resources were exerted, sometimes under the authority of congress, sometimes under the authority of the local government, to repel the enemy wherever he appeared. The debt incurred in support of the war was therefore, in the first instance, contracted partly by the continent, and partly by the states. When the system of requisitions was adopted, the transactions of the union were carried on, almost entirely, through the agency of the states; and when the measure of compensating the army for the depreciation of their pay became necessary, this burden, under the recommendation of congress, was assumed by the respective states. Some had funded this debt, and paid the interest upon it. Others had made no provision for the interest; but all, by taxes, paper money, or purchase, had, in some measure, reduced the principal. In their exertions some degree of inequality had obtained; and they looked anxiously to a settlement of accounts, for the ascertainment of claims which each supposed itself to have upon the union. Measures to effect this object had been taken by the former government; but they were slow in their progress, and intrinsic difficulties were found in the thing itself, not easily to be overcome.

The secretary of the treasury proposed to assume these debts, and to fund them in common with that which continued to be the proper debt of the union.

The resolution which comprehended this principle of the report, was vigorously opposed.

It was contended that the general government would acquire an undue influence, and that the state governments would be annihilated by the measure. Not only would all the influence of the public creditors be thrown into the scale of the former, but it would absorb all the powers of taxation, and leave to the latter only the shadow of a government. This would probably terminate in rendering the state governments useless, and would destroy the system so recently established. The union it was said, had been compared to a rope of sand; but gentlemen were cautioned not to push things to the opposite extreme. The attempt to strengthen it might be unsuccessful, and the cord might be strained until it should break.

The constitutional authority of the federal government to assume the debts of the states was questioned. Its powers, it was said, were specified, and this was not among them.

The policy of the measure, as it affected merely the government of the union, was controverted, and its justice was arraigned.

On the ground of policy it was objected, that the assumption would impose on the United States a burden, the weight of which was unascertained, and which would require an extension of taxation beyond the limits which prudence would prescribe. An attempt to raise the impost would be dangerous; and the excise added to it would not produce funds adequate to the object. A tax on real estate must be resorted to, objections to which had been made in every part of the union. It would be more adviseable to leave this source of revenue untouched in the hands of the state governments, who could apply to it with more facility, with a better understanding of the subject, and with less dissatisfaction to individuals, than could possibly be done by the government of the United States.

There existed no necessity for taking up this burden. The state creditors had not required it. There was no petition from them upon the subject. There was not only no application from the states, but there was reason to believe that they were seriously opposed to the measure. Many of them would certainly view it with a jealous,—a jaundiced eye. The convention of North Carolina, which adopted the constitution, had proposed, as an amendment to it, to deprive congress of the power of interfering between the respective states and their creditors: and there could be no obligation to assume more than the balances which on a final settlement would be found due to creditor states.

That the debt by being thus accumulated would be perpetuated was also an evil of real magnitude. Many of the states had already made considerable progress in extinguishing their debts, and the process might certainly be carried on more rapidly by them than by the union. A public debt seemed to be considered by some as a public blessing; but to this doctrine they were not converts. If, as they believed, a public debt was a public evil, it would be enormously increased by adding those of the states to that of the union.

The measure was unwise too as it would affect public credit. Such an augmentation of the debt must inevitably depreciate its value; since it was the character of paper, whatever denomination it might assume, to diminish in value in proportion to the quantity in circulation.

It would also increase an evil which was already sensibly felt. The state debts when assumed by the continent, would, as that of the union had already done, accumulate in large cities; and the dissatisfaction excited by the payment of taxes, would be increased by perceiving that the money raised from the people flowed into the hands of a few individuals. Still greater mischief was to be apprehended. A great part of this additional debt would go into the hands of foreigners; and the United States would be heavily burdened to pay an interest which could not be expected to remain in the country.

The measure was unjust, because it was burdening those states which had taxed themselves highly to discharge the claims of their creditors, with the debts of those which had not made the same exertions. It would delay the settlement of accounts between the individual states and the United States; and the supporters of the measure were openly charged with intending to defeat that settlement.

It was also said that, in its execution, the scheme would be found extremely embarrassing, perhaps impracticable. The case of a partial accession to the measure by the creditors, a case which would probably occur, presented a difficulty for which no provision was made, and of which no solution had been given. Should the creditors in some states come into the system, and those in others refuse to change their security, the government would be involved in perplexities from which no means of extricating itself had been shown. Nor would it be practicable to discriminate between the debts contracted for general and for local objects.

In the course of the debate, severe allusions were made to the conduct of particular states; and the opinions advanced in favour of the measure, were ascribed to local interests.

In support of the assumption, the debts of the states were traced to their origin. America, it was said, had engaged in a war, the object of which was equally interesting to every part of the union. It was not the war of a particular state, but of the United States. It was not the liberty and independence of a part, but of the whole, for which they had contended, and which they had acquired. The cause was a common cause. As brethren, the American people had consented to hazard property and life in its defence. All the sums expended in the attainment of this great object, whatever might be the authority under which they were raised or appropriated, conduced to the same end. Troops were raised, and military stores purchased, before congress assumed the command of the army, or the control of the war. The ammunition which repulsed the enemy at Bunker's Hill, was purchased by Massachusetts; and formed a part of the debt of that state.

Nothing could be more erroneous than the principle which had been assumed in argument, that the holders of securities issued by individual states were to be considered merely as state creditors;—as if the debt had been contracted on account of the particular state. It was contracted on account of the union, in that common cause in which all were equally interested.

From the complex nature of the political system which had been adopted in America, the war was, in a great measure, carried on through the agency of the state governments; and the debts were, in truth, the debts of the union, for which the states had made themselves responsible. Except the civil list, the whole state expenditure was in the prosecution of the war; and the state taxes had undeniably exceeded the provision for their civil list. The foundation for the several classes of the debt was reviewed in detail; and it was affirmed to be proved from the review, and from the books in the public offices, that, in its origin, a great part of it, even in form, and the whole, in fact, was equitably due from the continent. The states individually possessing all the resources of the nation, became responsible to certain descriptions of the public creditors. But they were the agents of the continent in contracting the debt; and its distribution among them for payment, arose from the division of political power which existed under the old confederation. A new arrangement of the system had taken place, and a power over the resources of the nation was conferred on the general government. With the funds, the debt also ought to be assumed. This investigation of its origin demonstrated that the assumption was not the creation of a new debt, but the reacknowledgment of liability for an old one, the payment of which had devolved on those members of the system, who, at the time, were alone capable of paying it. And thence was inferred, not only the justice of the measure, but a complete refutation of the arguments drawn from the constitution. If, in point of fact, the debt was in its origin continental, and had been transferred to the states for greater facility of payment, there could be no constitutional objection to restoring its original and real character.

The great powers of war, of taxation, and of borrowing money, which were vested in congress to pay the debts, and provide for the common defence and general welfare of the United States, comprised that in question. There could be no more doubt of their right to charge themselves with the payment of a debt contracted in the past war, than to borrow money for the prosecution of a future war. The impolicy of leaving the public creditors to receive payment from different sources was also strongly pressed; and the jealousy which would exist between the creditors of the union and of the states, was considered as a powerful argument in favour of giving them one common interest. This jealousy, it was feared, might be carried so far, as even to create an opposition to the laws of the union.

If the states should provide for their creditors, the same sum of money must be collected from the people, as would be required if the debt should be assumed; and it would probably be collected in a manner more burdensome, than if one uniform system should be established. If all should not make such provision, it would be unjust to leave the soldier of one state unpaid, while the services of the man who fought by his side were amply compensated; and, after having assumed the funds, it would dishonour the general government to permit a creditor for services rendered, or property advanced for the continent, to remain unsatisfied, because his claim had been transferred to the state, at a time when the state alone possessed the means of payment. By the injured and neglected creditor, such an arrangement might justly be considered as a disreputable artifice.

Instead of delaying, it was believed to be a measure which would facilitate the settlement of accounts between the states. Its advocates declared that they did not entertain, and never had entertained any wish to procrastinate a settlement. On the contrary, it was greatly desired by them. They had themselves brought forward propositions for that purpose; and they invited their adversaries to assist in improving the plan which had been introduced.

The settlement between the states, it was said, either would or would not be made. Should it ever take place, it would remedy any inequalities which might grow out of the assumption. Should it never take place, the justice of the measure became the more apparent. That the burdens in support of a common war, which from various causes had devolved unequally on the states, ought to be apportioned among them, was a truth too clear to be controverted; and this, if the settlement should never be accomplished, could be effected only by the measure now proposed. Indeed, in any event, it would be the only certain, as well as only eligible plan. For how were the debtor states to be compelled to pay the balances which should be found against them?

If the measure was recommended by considerations which rendered its ultimate adoption inevitable, the present was clearly preferable to any future time. It was desirable immediately to quiet the minds of the public creditors by assuring them that justice would be done; to simplify the forms of public debt; and to put an end to that speculation which had been so much reprobated, and which could be terminated only by giving the debt a real and permanent value.

That the assumption would impair the just influence of the states was controverted with great strength of argument. The diffusive representation in the state legislatures, the intimate connexion between the representative and his constituents, the influence of the state legislatures over the members of one branch of the national legislature, the nature of the powers exercised by the state governments which perpetually presented them to the people in a point of view calculated to lay hold of the public affections, were guarantees that the states would retain their due weight in the political system, and that a debt was not necessary to the solidity or duration of their power.

But the argument it was said proved too much. If a debt was now essential to the preservation of state authority, it would always be so. It must therefore never be extinguished, but must be perpetuated, in order to secure the existence of the state governments. If, for this purpose, it was indispensable that the expenses of the revolutionary war should be borne by the states, it would not be less indispensable that the expenses of future wars should be borne in the same manner. Either the argument was unfounded, or the constitution was wrong: and the powers of the sword and the purse ought not to have been conferred on the government of the union. Whatever speculative opinions might be entertained on this point, they were to administer the government according to the principles of the constitution as it was framed. But, it was added, if so much power follows the assumption as the objection implies, is it not time to ask—is it safe to forbear assuming? if the power is so dangerous, it will be so when exercised by the states. If assuming tends to consolidation, is the reverse, tending to disunion, a less weighty objection? if it is answered that the non assumption will not necessarily tend to disunion; neither, it may be replied, does the assumption necessarily tend to consolidation.

It was not admitted that the assumption would tend to perpetuate the debt. It could not be presumed that the general government would be less willing than the local governments to discharge it; nor could it be presumed that the means were less attainable by the former than the latter.

It was not contended that a public debt was a public blessing. Whether a debt was to be preferred to no debt was not the question. The debt was already contracted: and the question, so far as policy might be consulted, was, whether it was more for the public advantage to give it such a form as would render it applicable to the purposes of a circulating medium, or to leave it a mere subject of speculation, incapable of being employed to any useful purpose. The debt was admitted to be an evil; but it was an evil from which, if wisely modified, some benefit might be extracted; and which, in its present state, could have only a mischievous operation.

If the debt should be placed on adequate funds, its operation on public credit could not be pernicious: in its present precarious condition, there was much more to be apprehended in that respect.

To the objection that it would accumulate in large cities, it was answered it would be a monied capital, and would be held by those who chose to place money at interest; but by funding the debt, the present possessors would be enabled to part with it at its nominal value, instead of selling it at its present current rate. If it should centre in the hands of foreigners, the sooner it was appreciated to its proper standard, the greater quantity of specie would its transfer bring into the United States.

To the injustice of charging those states which had made great exertions for the payment of their debts with the burden properly belonging to those which had not made such exertions, it was answered, that every state must be considered as having exerted itself to the utmost of its resources; and that if it could not, or would not make provision for creditors to whom the union was equitably bound, the argument in favour of an assumption was the stronger.

The arguments drawn from local interests were repelled, and retorted, and a great degree of irritation was excited on both sides.

After a very animated discussion of several days, the question was taken, and the resolution was carried by a small majority. Soon after this decision, while the subject was pending before the house, the delegates from North Carolina took their seats, and changed the strength of parties. By a majority of two voices, the resolution was recommitted; and, after a long and ardent debate, was negatived by the same majority.

This proposition continued to be supported with a degree of earnestness which its opponents termed pertinacious, but not a single opinion was changed. It was brought forward in the new and less exceptionable form of assuming specific sums from each state. Under this modification of the principle, the extraordinary contributions of particular states during the war, and their exertions since the peace, might be regarded; and the objections to the measure, drawn from the uncertainty of the sum to be assumed, would be removed. But these alterations produced no change of sentiment; and the bill was sent up to the senate with a provision for those creditors only whose certificates of debt purported to be payable by the union.

In this state of things, the measure is understood to have derived aid from another, which was of a nature strongly to interest particular parts of the union.

From the month of June, 1783, when congress was driven from Philadelphia by the mutiny of a part of the Pennsylvania line, the necessity of selecting some place for a permanent residence, in which the government of the union might exercise sufficient authority to protect itself from violence and insult, had been generally acknowledged. Scarcely any subject had occupied more time, or had more agitated the members of the former congress than this.

In December, 1784, an ordinance was passed for appointing commissioners to purchase land on the Delaware, in the neighbourhood of its falls, and to erect thereon the necessary public buildings for the reception of congress, and the officers of government; but the southern interest had been sufficiently strong to arrest the execution of this ordinance by preventing an appropriation of funds, which required the assent of nine states. Under the existing government, this subject had received the early attention of congress; and many different situations from the Delaware to the Potomac inclusive, had been earnestly supported; but a majority of both houses had not concurred in favour of any one place. With as little success, attempts had been made to change the temporary residence of congress. Although New York was obviously too far to the east, so many conflicting interests were brought into operation whenever the subject was touched, that no motion designating a more central place, could succeed. At length, a compact respecting the temporary and permanent seat of government was entered into between the friends of Philadelphia, and the Potomac, stipulating that congress should adjourn to and hold its sessions in Philadelphia, for ten years, during which time, buildings for the accommodation of the government should be erected at some place on the Potomac, to which the government should remove at the expiration of the term. This compact having united the representatives of Pennsylvania and Delaware with the friends of the Potomac, in favour both of the temporary and permanent residence which had been agreed on between them, a majority was produced in favour of the two situations, and a bill which was brought into the senate in conformity with this previous arrangement, passed both houses by small majorities. This act was immediately followed by an amendment to the bill then depending before the senate for funding the debt of the union. The amendment was similar in principle to that which had been unsuccessfully proposed in the house of representatives. By its provisions, twenty-one millions five hundred thousand dollars of the state debts were assumed in specified proportions; and it was particularly enacted that no certificate should be received from a state creditor which could be "ascertained to have been issued for any purpose other than compensations and expenditures for services or supplies towards the prosecution of the late war, and the defence of the United States, or of some part thereof, during the same."

When the question was taken in the house of representatives on this amendment, two members representing districts on the Potomac, who, in all the previous stages of the business, had voted against the assumption, declared themselves in its favour; and thus the majority was changed.[1]

Thus was a measure carried, which was supported and opposed with a degree of zeal and earnestness not often manifested; and which furnished presages, not to be mistaken, that the spirit with which the opposite opinions had been maintained, would not yield, contentedly, to the decision of a bare majority. This measure has constituted one of the great grounds of accusation against the first administration of the general government; and it is fair to acknowledge, that though, in its progress, it derived no aid from the President, whose opinion remained in his own bosom, it received the full approbation of his judgment.

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[1] It has ever been understood that these members were, on principle, in favour of the assumption as modified in the amendment made by the senate; but they withheld their assent from it when originally proposed in the house of representatives, in the opinion that the increase of the national debt, added to the necessity of giving to the departments of the national government a more central residence. It is understood that a greater number would have changed had it been necessary.

A bill, at length, passed both houses, funding the debt upon principles which lessened considerably the weight of the public burdens, and was entirely satisfactory to the public creditors. The proceeds of the sales of the lands lying in the western territory, and, by a subsequent act of the same session, the surplus product of the revenue after satisfying the appropriations which were charged upon it, with the addition of two millions, which the President was authorized to borrow at five per centum, constituted a sinking fund to be applied to the reduction of the debt.

The effect of this measure was great and rapid. The public paper suddenly rose, and was for a short time above par. The immense wealth which individuals acquired by this unexpected appreciation, could not be viewed with indifference. Those who participated in its advantages, regarded the author of a system to which they were so greatly indebted, with an enthusiasm of attachment to which scarcely any limits were assigned. To many others, this adventitious collection of wealth in particular hands, was a subject rather of chagrin than of pleasure; and the reputation which the success of his plans gave to the secretary of the treasury, was not contemplated with unconcern. As if the debt had been created by the existing government, not by a war which gave liberty and independence to the United States, its being funded was ascribed by many, not to a sense of justice, and to a liberal and enlightened policy, but to the desire of bestowing on the government an artificial strength, by the creation of a monied interest which would be subservient to its will.

The effects produced by giving the debt a permanent value, justified the predictions of those whose anticipations had been most favourable. The sudden increase of monied capital derived from it, invigorated commerce, and gave a new stimulus to agriculture.

About this time, there was a great and visible improvement in the circumstances of the people. Although the funding system was certainly not inoperative in producing this improvement, it can not be justly ascribed to any single cause. Progressive industry had gradually repaired the losses sustained by the war; and the influence of the constitution on habits of thinking and acting, though silent, was considerable. In depriving the states of the power to impair the obligation of contracts, or to make any thing but gold and silver a tender in payment of debts, the conviction was impressed on that portion of society which had looked to the government for relief from embarrassment, that personal exertions alone could free them from difficulties; and an increased degree of industry and economy was the natural consequence of this opinion.

On the 12th of August, after an arduous session, congress adjourned, to meet in Philadelphia the first Monday in the following December.

While the discussions in the national legislature related to subjects, and were conducted in a temper, well calculated to rouse the active spirit of party, the external relations of the United States wore an aspect not perfectly serene. To the hostile temper manifested by the Indians on the western and southern frontiers, an increased degree of importance was given by the apprehension that their discontents were fomented by the intrigues of Britain and of Spain. From Canada, the Indians of the north-west were understood to be furnished with the means of prosecuting a war which they were stimulated to continue; and, to the influence of the governor of the Floridas had been partly attributed the failure of the negotiation with the Creeks. That this influence would still be exerted to prevent a friendly intercourse with that nation was firmly believed; and it was feared that Spain might take a part in the open hostilities threatened by the irritable dispositions of individuals in both countries. From the intimate connexion subsisting between the members of the house of Bourbon, this event was peculiarly deprecated; and the means of avoiding it were sought with solicitude. These considerations determined the President to make another effort at negotiation; but, to preserve the respect of these savages for the United States, it was at the same time resolved that the agent to be employed should visit the country on other pretexts, and should carry a letter of introduction to M'Gillivray, blending with other subjects a strong representation of the miseries which a war with the United States would bring upon his people, and an earnest exhortation to repair with the chiefs of his nation to the seat of the federal government, in order to effect a solid and satisfactory peace. Colonel Willett was selected for this service; and he acquitted himself so well of the duty assigned to him, as to induce the chiefs of the nation, with M'Gillivray at their head, to repair to New York, where negotiations were opened which terminated in a treaty of peace,[1] signed on the 7th day of August. [2]

The pacific overtures made to the Indians of the Wabash and the Miamis not having been equally successful, the western frontiers were still exposed to their destructive incursions. A long course of experience had convinced the President that, on the failure of negotiation, sound policy and true economy, not less than humanity, required the immediate employment of a force which should carry death and destruction into the heart of the hostile settlements. Either not feeling the same impressions, or disposed to indulge the wishes of the western people, who declared openly their preference for desultory military expeditions, congress did not adopt measures corresponding with the wishes of the executive, and the military establishment [3] was not equal to the exigence. The distresses of the frontier establishment, therefore, still continued; and the hostility they had originally manifested to the constitution, sustained no diminution.

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[1] On the first information at St. Augustine that M'Gillivray was about to repair to New York, the intelligence was communicated to the governor at the Havanna, and the secretary of East Florida came to New York, with a large sum of money to purchase flour, as it was said; but to embarrass the negotiations with the Creeks was believed to be his real design. He was closely watched, and measures were taken to render any attempts he might make abortive.

[2] See note, No. IV. at the end of the volume.

[3] On giving his assent to the bill "regulating the military establishment of the United States," the President subjoined to the entry in his diary the remark, that although he gave it his sanction, "he did not conceive that the military establishment was adequate to the exigencies of the government, and to the protection it was intended to afford." It consisted of one regiment of infantry, and one battalion of artillery amounting in the total, exclusive of commissioned officers, to twelve hundred and sixteen men.

No progress had been made in adjusting the points of controversy with Spain and Britain. With the former power, the question of boundary remained unsettled; and the cabinet of Madrid discovered no disposition to relax the rigour of its pretensions respecting the navigation of the Mississippi. Its general conduct furnished no foundation for a hope that its dispositions towards the United States were friendly, or that it could view their growing power without jealousy.

The non-execution of the 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th articles of the treaty of peace, still furnished the United States and Great Britain with matter for reciprocal crimination, which there was the more difficulty in removing, because no diplomatic intercourse was maintained between them. The cabinet of St. James having never appointed a minister to the United States, and Mr. Adams having returned from London without effecting the object of his mission, the American government felt some difficulty in repeating advances which had been treated with neglect. Yet there was much reason to desire full explanations with the English government, and to understand perfectly its views and intentions. The subjects for discussion were delicate in their nature, and could not be permitted to remain in their present state, without hazarding the most serious consequences. The detention of a part of the territory of the United States, was a circumstance of much importance to the honour, as well as to the interests of the nation; and the commercial intercourse between the two countries was so extensive, as to require amicable and permanent regulations. The early attention of the President had been directed to these subjects; and, in October, 1789, he had resolved on taking informal measures to sound the British cabinet, and to ascertain its views respecting them. This negotiation was entrusted to Mr. Gouverneur Morris, who had been carried by private business to Europe; and he conducted it with ability and address, but was unable to bring it to a happy conclusion. The result of his conferences with the Duke of Leeds, and with Mr. Pitt, was a conviction that the British government, considering the posts they occupied on the southern side of the great lakes as essential to their monopoly of the fur trade, would surrender them reluctantly, and was not desirous of entering into a commercial treaty. Those ministers expressed a wish to be on the best terms with America; but repeated the complaints which had been previously made by Lord Carmarthen, of the non-execution of the treaty of peace on the part of the United States. To the observations made by Mr. Morris, that the constitution lately adopted, and the courts established under it, amounted to a full compliance with that treaty on the part of the American government, it was answered, that losses had already been sustained in consequence of the obstructions given by the states to the fair operation of that instrument, which rendered a faithful observance of it, at present, impossible; and, in a note, the Duke of Leeds avowed the intention, if the delay on the part of the American government to fulfil its engagements made in the treaty should have rendered their final completion impracticable, to retard the fulfilment of those which depended entirely on Great Britain, until redress should be granted to the subjects of his majesty on the specific points of the treaty itself, or a fair and just compensation obtained for the non-performance of those stipulations which the United States had failed to observe. Though urged by Mr. Morris to state explicitly in what respects, and to what degree, he considered the final completion of those engagements to which the United States were bound, as having been rendered impracticable, no such statement was given; and the British government seemed inclined to avoid, for the present, those full and satisfactory explanations, which were sought on the part of the United States.

After detailing the motives which in his opinion influenced the English cabinet in wishing to suspend for a time all discussions with America, Mr. Morris observed, "perhaps there never was a moment in which this country felt herself greater; and consequently, it is the most unfavourable moment to obtain advantageous terms from her in any bargain."

Whilst these negotiations were depending, intelligence was received at London of the attack made on the British settlement at Nootka Sound; and preparations were instantly made to resent the insult alleged to have been offered to the nation.

The high ground taken on this occasion by the government, and the vigour with which it armed in support of its pretensions, furnished strong reasons for the opinion that a war with Spain, and probably with France, would soon be commenced.

In America, this was considered as a favourable juncture for urging the claims of the United States to the free navigation of the Mississippi. Mr. Carmichael, their charge d'affaires at the court of Madrid, was instructed not only to press this point with earnestness, but to use his utmost endeavours to secure the unmolested use of that river in future, by obtaining a cession of the island of New Orleans, and of the Floridas. A full equivalent for this cession would be found, it was said, in the sincere friendship of the United States, and in the security it would give to the territories of Spain, west of the Mississippi.

Mr. Carmichael was also instructed to point the attention of the Spanish government to the peculiar situation of the United States. To one half of their territory, the use of the Mississippi was indispensable. No efforts could prevent their acquiring it. That they would acquire it, either by acting separately, or in conjunction with Great Britain, was one of those inevitable events against which human wisdom could make no provision. To the serious consideration of the Spanish government, therefore, were submitted the consequences which must result to their whole empire in America, either from hostilities with the United States, or from a seizure of Louisiana by Great Britain.

The opinion, that in the event of war between Great Britain and Spain, Louisiana would be invaded from Canada, was not a mere suggestion for the purpose of aiding the negotiations at Madrid. It was seriously adopted by the American government; and the attention of the executive was turned to the measures which it would be proper to take, should application be made for permission to march a body of troops, through the unsettled territories of the United States, into the dominions of Spain; or should the attempt be made to march them, without permission.

Among the circumstances which contributed to the opinion that, in the event of war, the arms of Great Britain would be directed against the settlements of Spain in America, was the continuance of Lord Dorchester in the government of Canada. This nobleman had intimated a wish to visit New York on his return to England; but the prospect of a rupture with Spain had determined him to remain in Canada. Under the pretext of making his acknowledgments for the readiness with which his desire to pass through New York had been acceded to, his lordship despatched Major Beckwith, a member of his family, to sound the American government, and if possible, to ascertain its dispositions towards the two nations. Alluding to the negotiations which had been commenced in London, this gentleman endeavoured to assign a satisfactory cause for the delays which had intervened. It was not improbable, he said, that these delays, and some other circumstances, might have impressed Mr. Morris with an idea of backwardness on the part of the British ministry. His lordship, however, had directed him to say, that an inference of this sort would not, in his opinion, be well founded, as he had reason to believe that the British cabinet was inclined not only towards a friendly intercourse, but towards an alliance with the United States.

Major Beckwith represented the particular ground of quarrel as one which ought to interest all commercial nations in favour of the views of Great Britain; and, from that circumstance, he presumed that, should a war ensue, the United States would find their interest in taking part with Britain, rather than with Spain.

After expressing the concern with which Lord Dorchester had heard of the depredations of the savages on the western frontier of the United States, he declared that his lordship, so far from countenancing these depredations, had taken every proper opportunity to impress upon the Indians a pacific disposition; and that, on his first hearing of the outrages lately committed, he had sent a messenger to endeavour to prevent them. Major Beckwith further intimated, that the perpetrators of the late murders were banditti, composed chiefly of Creeks and Cherokees, in the Spanish interest, over whom the governor of Canada possessed no influence.

These communications were laid before the President, and appeared to him to afford an explanation of the delays experienced by Mr. Morris. He was persuaded that a disposition existed in the cabinet of London to retain things in their actual situation, until the intentions of the American government should be ascertained with respect to the war supposed to be approaching. If the United States would enter into an alliance with Great Britain, and would make a common cause with her against Spain, the way would be smoothed to the attainment of all their objects: but if America should be disinclined to such a connexion, and especially, if she should manifest any partiality towards Spain, no progress would be made in the attempt to adjust the points of difference between the two nations. Taking this view of the subject, he directed that the further communications of Mr. Beckwith should be heard civilly, and that their want of official authenticity should be hinted delicately, without using any expressions which might, in the most remote degree, impair the freedom of the United States, to pursue, without reproach, in the expected war, such a line of conduct as their interests or honour might dictate.

In the opinion that it would not only be useless but dishonourable further to press a commercial treaty, or the exchange of ministers, and that the subject of the western posts ought not again to be moved on the part of the United States, until they should be in a condition to speak a decisive language, the powers given to Mr. Morris were withdrawn. Should the interest of Britain produce a disposition favourable to an amicable arrangement of differences, and to a liberal commercial intercourse secured by compact, it was believed that she would make the requisite advances; until then, or until some other change of circumstances should require a change of conduct, things were to remain in their actual situation.

About the time of adopting this resolution, the dispute between Britain and Spain was adjusted. Finding France unwilling to engage in his quarrel, his catholic majesty, too weak to encounter alone the force of the British empire, yielded every point in controversy, and thus were terminated for the present, both the fear of inconveniences, and the hope of advantages which might result to America from hostilities between the two powers, whose dominions were in her neighbourhood, and with each of whom she was already engaged in controversies not easily to be accommodated.

Incessant application to public business, and the consequent change of active for sedentary habits, had greatly impaired the constitution of the President; and, during the last session of congress, he had, for the second time since entering on the duties of his present station, been attacked by a severe disease which reduced him to the brink of the grave. Exercise and a temporary relief from the cares of office being essential to the restoration of his health, he determined, for the short interval afforded by the recess of the legislature, to retire to the tranquil shades of Mount Vernon. After returning from a visit to Rhode Island,[1] which state not having then adopted the American constitution, had not been included in his late tour through New England, he took leave of New York; and hastened to that peaceful retreat, and those rural employments, his taste for which neither military glory, nor political power, could ever diminish.

After a short indulgence in these favourite scenes, it became necessary to repair to Philadelphia, in order to meet the national legislature.

In the speech delivered to congress at the commencement of their third session, the President expressed much satisfaction at the favourable prospect of public affairs; and particularly noticed the progress of public credit, and the productiveness of the revenue.

Adverting to foreign nations,[2] he said, "the disturbed situation of Europe, and particularly the critical posture of the great maritime powers, whilst it ought to make us more thankful for the general peace and security enjoyed by the United States, reminds us at the same time of the circumspection with which it becomes us to preserve these blessings. It requires also, that we should not overlook the tendency of a war, and even of preparations for war among the nations most concerned in active commerce with this country, to abridge the means, and thereby at least to enhance the price, of transporting its valuable productions to their proper market." To the serious reflection of congress was recommended the prevention of embarrassments from these contingencies, by such encouragement to American navigation as would render the commerce and agriculture of the United States less dependent on foreign bottoms.

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[1] Rhode Island had adopted the constitution in the preceding May, and had thus completed the union.

[2] In a more confidential message to the senate, all the objects of the negotiation in which Mr. Morris had been employed were detailed, and the letters of that gentleman, with the full opinion of the President were communicated.

After expressing to the house of representatives his confidence arising from the sufficiency of the revenues already established, for the objects to which they were appropriated, he added, "allow me moreover to hope that it will be a favourite policy with you not merely to secure a payment of the interest of the debt funded, but as far, and as fast as the growing resources of the country will permit, to exonerate it of the principal itself." Many subjects relative to the interior government were succinctly and briefly mentioned; and the speech concluded with the following impressive and admonitory sentiment. "In pursuing the various and weighty business of the present session, I indulge the fullest persuasion that your consultations will be marked with wisdom, and animated by the love of country. In whatever belongs to my duty, you shall have all the co-operation which an undiminished zeal for its welfare can inspire. It will be happy for us both, and our best reward, if by a successful administration of our respective trusts, we can make the established government more and more instrumental in promoting the good of our fellow citizens, and more and more the object of their attachment and confidence."

The addresses of the two houses, in answer to the speech, proved that the harmony between the executive and legislative departments, with which the government had gone into operation, had sustained no essential interruption. But in the short debate which took place on the occasion, in the house of representatives, a direct disapprobation of one of the measures of the executive government was, for the first time, openly expressed.

In the treaty lately concluded with the Creeks, an extensive territory claimed by Georgia, under treaties, the validity of which was contested by the Indian chiefs, had been entirely, or in great part, relinquished. This relinquishment excited serious discontents in that state; and was censured by General

Jackson with considerable warmth, as an unjustifiable abandonment of the rights and interests of Georgia. No specific motion, however, was made, and the subject was permitted to pass away for the present.

Scarcely were the debates on the address concluded, when several interesting reports were received from the secretary of the treasury, suggesting such further measures as were deemed necessary for the establishment of public credit.

It will be recollected that in his original report on this subject, the secretary had recommended the assumption of the state debts; and had proposed to enable the treasury to meet the increased demand upon it, which this measure would occasion, by an augmentation of the duties on imported wines, spirits, tea, and coffee, and by imposing duties on spirits distilled within the country. The assumption not having been adopted until late in the session, the discussion on the revenue which would be required for this portion of the public debt did not commence, until the house had become impatient for an adjournment. As much contrariety of opinion was disclosed, and the subject did not press,[1] it was deferred to the ensuing session; and an order was made, requiring the secretary of the treasury to prepare and report such further provision as might, in his opinion, be necessary for establishing the public credit. In obedience to this order, several reports had been prepared, the first of which repeated the recommendation of an additional impost on foreign distilled spirits, and of a duty on spirits distilled within the United States. The estimated revenue from these sources was eight hundred and seventy-seven thousand five hundred dollars, affording a small excess over the sum which would be required to pay the interest on the assumed debt. The policy of the measure was discussed in a well digested and able argument, detailing many motives, in addition to those assigned in his original report, for preferring the system now recommended, to accumulated burdens on commerce, or to a direct tax on lands.

A new tax is the certain rallying point for all those who are unfriendly to the administration, or to the minister by whom it is proposed. But that recommended by the secretary, contained intrinsic causes of objection which would necessarily add to the number of its enemies. All that powerful party in the United States, which attached itself to the local, rather than to the general government, would inevitably contemplate any system of internal revenue with jealous disapprobation. They considered the imposition of a tax by congress on any domestic manufacture, as the intrusion of a foreign power into their particular concerns, which excited serious apprehensions for state importance, and for liberty. In the real or supposed interests of many individuals was also found a distinct motive for hostility to the measure. A large portion of the American population, especially that which had spread itself over the extensive regions of the west, consuming imported articles to a very inconsiderable amount, was not much affected by the impost on foreign merchandize. But the duty on spirits distilled within the United States reached them, and consequently rendered them hostile to the tax.

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[1] The interest on the assumed debt was to commence with the year 1792.

1791.

A bill, which was introduced in pursuance of the report, was opposed with great vehemence by a majority of the southern and western members. By some of them it was insisted that no sufficient testimony had yet been exhibited, that the taxes already imposed would not be equal to the exigencies of the public. But, admitting the propriety of additional burdens on the people, it was contended that other sources of revenue, less exceptionable and less odious than this, might be explored. The duty was branded with the hateful epithet of an excise, a species of taxation, it was said, so peculiarly oppressive as to be abhorred even in England; and which was totally incompatible with the spirit of liberty. The facility with which it might be extended to other objects, was urged against its admission into the American system; and declarations made against it by the congress of 1775, were quoted in confirmation of the justice with which inherent vices were ascribed to this mode of collecting taxes. So great was the hostility manifested against it in some of the states that the revenue officers might be endangered from the fury of the people; and, in all, it would increase a ferment which had been already extensively manifested. Resolutions of Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina, reprobating the assumption, were referred to as unequivocal evidences of growing dissatisfaction; and the last mentioned state had even expressed its decided hostility to any law of excise. The legislature of North Carolina had rejected with scorn, a proposal for taking an oath to support the constitution of the United States; had refused to admit persons sentenced to imprisonment under the laws of the United States into their jails; and another circumstance was alluded to, but not explained, which was said to exhibit a temper still more hostile to the general government than either of those which had been stated.

When required to produce a system in lieu of that which they so much execrated, the opponents of the bill alternately mentioned an increased duty on imported articles generally, a particular duty on molasses, a direct tax, a tax on salaries, pensions, and lawyers; a duty on newspapers, and a stamp act.

The friends of the bill contended, that the reasons for believing the existing revenue would be insufficient to meet the engagements of the United States, were as satisfactory as the nature of the case would admit, or as ought to be required. The estimates were founded on the best data which were attainable, and the funds already provided, had been calculated by the proper officer to pay the interest on that part of the debt only for which they were pledged. Those estimates were referred to as documents, from which it would be unsafe to depart. They were also in possession of official statements, showing the productiveness of the taxes from the time the revenue bill had been in operation; and arguments were drawn from these, demonstrating the danger to which the infant credit of the United States would be exposed, by relying on the existing funds for the interest on the assumed debt. It was not probable that the proposed duties would yield a sum much exceeding that which would be necessary; but should they fortunately do so, the surplus revenue might be advantageously employed in extinguishing a part of the principal. They were not, they said, of opinion, that a public debt was a public blessing, or that it ought to be perpetuated.

An augmentation of the revenue being indispensable to the solidity of the public credit, a more eligible system than that proposed in the bill, could not, it was believed, be devised. Still further to burden commerce, would be a hazardous experiment which might afford no real supplies to the treasury. Until some lights should be derived from experience, it behoved the legislature to be cautious not to lay such impositions upon trade as might probably introduce a spirit of smuggling, which, with a nominal increase, would occasion a real diminution of revenue. In the opinion of the best judges, the impost on the mass of foreign merchandise could not safely be carried further for the present. The extent of the mercantile capital of the United States would not justify the attempt. Forcible arguments were also drawn from the policy and the justice of multiplying the subjects of taxation, and diversifying them by a union of internal with external objects.

Neither would a direct tax be adviseable. The experience of the world had proved, that a tax on consumption was less oppressive, and more productive, than a tax on either property or income. Without discussing the principles on which the fact was founded, the fact itself was incontestable, that, by insensible means, much larger sums might be drawn from any class of men, than could be extracted from them by open and direct taxes. To the latter system there were still other objections. The difficulty of carrying it into operation, no census having yet been taken, would not be inconsiderable; and the expense of collection through a country thinly settled, would be enormous. Add to this, that public opinion was believed to be more decidedly and unequivocally opposed to it, than to a duty on ardent spirits. North Carolina had expressed her hostility to the one as well as to the other, and several other states were known to disapprove of direct taxes. From the real objections which existed against them, and for other reasons suggested in the report of the secretary, they ought, it was said, to remain untouched, as a resource when some great emergency should require an exertion of all the faculties of the United States.

Against the substitution of a duty on internal negotiations, it was said, that revenue to any considerable extent could be collected from them only by means of a stamp act, which was not less obnoxious to popular resentment than an excise, would be less certainly productive than the proposed duties, and was, in every respect, less eligible.

The honour, the justice, and the faith of the United States were pledged, it was said, to that class of creditors for whose claims the bill under consideration was intended to provide. No means of making the provision had been suggested, which, on examination, would be found equally eligible with a duty on ardent spirits. Much of the public prejudice which appeared in certain parts of the United States against the measure, was to be ascribed to their hostility to the term "excise," a term which had been inaccurately applied to the duty in question. When the law should be carried into operation, it would be found not to possess those odious qualities which had excited resentment against a system of excise. In those states where the collection of a duty on spirits distilled within the country had become familiar to the people, the same prejudices did not exist. On the good sense and virtue of the nation they could confidently rely for acquiescence in a measure which the public exigencies rendered necessary, which tended to equalize the public burdens, and which in its execution would not be oppressive.

A motion made by Mr. Jackson, to strike out that section which imposed a duty on domestic distilled spirits, was negatived by thirty-six to sixteen; and the bill was carried by thirty-five to twenty-one.

Some days after the passage of this bill, another question was brought forward, which was understood to involve principles of deep interest to the government.

The secretary of the treasury had been the uniform advocate of a national bank. Believing that such an institution would be "of primary importance to the prosperous administration of the finances; and of the greatest utility in the operations connected with the support of public credit," he had earnestly recommended its adoption in the first general system which he presented to the view of congress; and, at the present session, had repeated that recommendation in a special report, containing a copious and perspicuous argument on the policy of the measure. A bill conforming to the plan he suggested was sent down from the senate, and was permitted to proceed, unmolested, in the house of representatives, to the third reading. On the final question, a great, and, it would seem, an unexpected opposition was made to its passage. Mr. Madison, Mr. Giles, Mr. Jackson, and Mr. Stone spoke against it. The general utility of banking systems was not admitted, and the particular bill before the house was censured on its merits; but the great strength of the argument was directed against the constitutional authority of congress to pass an act for incorporating a national bank.

The government of the United States, it was said, was limited; and the powers which it might legitimately exercise were enumerated in the constitution itself. In this enumeration, the power now contended for was not to be found. Not being expressly given, it must be implied from those which were given, or it could not be vested in the government. The clauses under which it could be claimed were then reviewed and critically examined; and it was contended that, on fair construction, no one of these could be understood to imply so important a power as that of creating a corporation.

The clause which enables congress to pass all laws necessary and proper to execute the specified powers, must, according to the natural and obvious force of the terms and the context, be limited to means *necessary* to the *end* and *incident* to the *nature* of the specified powers. The clause, it was said, was in fact merely declaratory of what would have resulted by unavoidable implication, as the appropriate, and as it were technical means of executing those powers. Some gentlemen observed, that "the true exposition of a necessary mean to produce a given end was that mean without which the end could not be produced."

The bill was supported by Mr. Ames, Mr. Sedgwick, Mr. Smith, of South Carolina, Mr. Lawrence, Mr. Boudinot, Mr. Gerry, and Mr. Vining.

The utility of banking institutions was said to be demonstrated by their effects. In all commercial countries they had been resorted to as an instrument of great efficacy in mercantile transactions; and even in the United States, their public and private advantages had been felt and acknowledged.

Respecting the policy of the measure, no well founded doubt could be entertained; but the objections to the constitutional authority of congress deserved to be seriously considered.

That the government was limited by the terms of its creation was not controverted; and that it could exercise only those powers which were conferred on it by the constitution, was admitted. If, on examination, that instrument should be found to forbid the passage of the bill, it must be rejected, though it would be with deep regret that its friends would suffer such an opportunity of serving their country to escape for the want of a constitutional power to improve it.

In asserting the authority of the legislature to pass the bill, gentlemen contended, that incidental as well as express powers must necessarily belong to every government: and that, when a power is delegated to effect particular objects, all the known and usual means of effecting them, must pass as incidental to it. To remove all doubt on this subject, the constitution of the United States had recognised the principle, by enabling congress to make all laws which may be necessary and proper for carrying into execution the powers vested in the government. They maintained the sound construction of this grant to be a recognition of an authority in the national legislature, to employ all the known and usual means for executing the powers vested in the government. They then took a comprehensive view of those powers, and contended that a bank was a known and usual instrument by which several of them were exercised.

After a debate of great length, which was supported on both sides with ability, and with that ardour which was naturally excited by the importance attached by each party to the principle in contest, the question was put, and the bill was carried in the affirmative by a majority of nineteen voices.

The point which had been agitated with so much zeal in the house of representatives, was examined with equal deliberation by the executive. The cabinet was divided upon it. The secretary of state, and the attorney general, conceived that congress had clearly transcended their constitutional powers; while the secretary of the treasury, with equal clearness, maintained the opposite opinion. The advice of each minister, with his reasoning in support of it, was required in writing, and their arguments were considered by the President with all that attention which the magnitude of the question, and the interest taken in it by the opposing parties, so eminently required. This deliberate investigation of the subject terminated in a conviction, that the constitution of the United States authorized the measure;[1] and the sanction of the executive was given to the act.

The judgment is so much influenced by the wishes, the affections, and the general theories of those by whom any political proposition is decided, that a contrariety of opinion on this great constitutional question ought to excite no surprise. It must be recollected that the conflict between the powers of the general and state governments was coeval with those governments. Even during the war, the preponderance of the states was obvious; and, in a very few years after peace, the struggle ended in the utter abasement of the general government. Many causes concurred to produce a constitution which was deemed more competent to the preservation of the union, but its adoption was opposed by great numbers; and in some of the large states especially, its enemies soon felt and manifested their superiority. The old line of division was still as strongly marked as ever. Many retained the opinion that liberty could be endangered only by encroachments upon the states; and that it was the great duty of patriotism to restrain the powers of the general government within the narrowest possible limits.

In the other party, which was also respectable for its numbers, many were found who had watched the progress of American affairs, and who sincerely believed that the real danger which threatened the republic was to be looked for in the undue ascendency of the states. To them it appeared, that the substantial powers, and the extensive means of influence, which were retained by the local sovereignties, furnished them with weapons for aggression which were not easily to be resisted, and that it behoved all those who were anxious for the happiness of their country, to guard the equilibrium established in the constitution, by preserving unimpaired, all the legitimate powers of the union. These were more confirmed in their sentiments, by observing the temper already discovered in the legislatures of several states, respecting the proceedings of congress.

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[1] See note, No. V. at the end of the volume.

To this great and radical division of opinion, which would necessarily affect every question on the authority of the national legislature, other motives were added, which were believed to possess considerable influence on all measures connected with the finances.

As an inevitable effect of the state of society, the public debt had greatly accumulated in the middle and northern states, whose inhabitants had derived, from its rapid appreciation, a proportional augmentation of their wealth. This circumstance could not fail to contribute to the complacency with which the plans of the secretary were viewed by those who had felt their benefit, nor to the irritation with which they were contemplated by others who had parted with their claims on the nation. It is not impossible, that personal considerations also mingled themselves with those which were merely political.

With so many causes to bias the judgment, it would not have been wonderful if arguments less plausible than those advanced by either party had been deemed conclusive on its adversary; nor was it a matter of surprise that each should have denied to those which were urged in opposition, the weight to which they were certainly entitled. The liberal mind which can review them without prejudice, will charge neither the supporters nor the opponents of the bill with insincerity, nor with being knowingly actuated by motives which might not have been avowed.

This measure made a deep impression on many members of the legislature; and contributed, not inconsiderably, to the complete organization of those distinct and visible parties, which, in their long and dubious conflict for power, have since shaken the United States to their centre.

Among the last acts of the present congress, was an act to augment the military etsablishment of the United States.

The earnest endeavours of the President to give security to the north western frontiers, by pacific arrangements, having been entirely unavailing, it became his duty to employ such other means as were placed in his hands, for the protection of the country. Confirmed by all his experience in the opinion that vigorous offensive operations alone could bring an Indian war to a happy conclusion, he had planned an expedition against the hostile tribes north west of the Ohio, as soon as the impracticability of effecting a treaty with them had been ascertained.

General Harmer, a veteran of the revolution, who had received his appointment under the former government, was placed at the head of the federal troops. On the 30th of September, he marched from fort Washington with three hundred and twenty regulars. The whole army when joined by the militia of Pennsylvania and Kentucky amounted to fourteen hundred and fifty-three men. About the middle of October, Colonel Harden, who commanded the Kentucky militia, and who had been also a continental officer of considerable merit, was detached at the head of six hundred men, chiefly militia, to reconnoitre the ground, and to ascertain the intentions of the enemy. On his approach, the Indians set fire to their principal village, and fled with precipitation to the woods. As the object of the expedition would be only half accomplished, unless the savages could be brought to action and defeated, Colonel Harden was again detached at the head of two hundred and ten men, thirty of whom were regulars. About ten miles west of Chilicothe, where the main body of the army lay, he was attacked by a party of Indians. The Pennsylvanians, who composed his left column, had previously fallen in the rear; and the Kentuckians, disregarding the exertions of their colonel, and of a few other officers, fled on the first appearance of an enemy. The small corps of regulars commanded by Lieutenant Armstrong made a brave resistance. After twenty-three of them had fallen in the field the surviving seven made their escape and rejoined the army.

Notwithstanding this check, the remaining towns on the Scioto were reduced to ashes, and the provisions laid up for the winter were entirely destroyed. This service being accomplished, the army commenced its march towards fort Washington. Being desirous of wiping off the disgrace which his arms had sustained, General Harmer halted about eight miles from Chilicothe, and once more detached Colonel Harden with orders to find the enemy and bring on an engagement. His command consisted of three hundred and sixty men, of whom sixty were regulars commanded by Major Wyllys. Early the next morning, this detachment reached the confluence of the St. Joseph and St. Mary, where it was divided into three columns. The left division, commanded by Colonel Harden in person, crossed the St. Joseph, and proceeded up its western bank. The centre, consisting of the federal troops, was led by Major Wyllys up the eastern side of that river; and the right, under the command of Major M'Millan, marched along a range of heights which commanded the right flank of the centre division. The columns had proceeded but a short distance, when each was met by a considerable body of Indians, and a severe engagement ensued. The militia retrieved their reputation, and several of their bravest officers fell. The heights on the right having been, from some cause not mentioned, unoccupied by the American troops, the savages seized them early in the action, and attacked the right flank of the centre with great fury. Although Major Wyllys was among the first who fell, the battle was maintained by the regulars with spirit, and considerable execution was done on both sides. At length, the scanty remnant of this small band, quite overpowered by numbers, was driven off the ground, leaving fifty of their comrades, exclusive of Major Wyllys and Lieutenant Farthingham, dead upon the field. The loss sustained by the militia was also considerable. It amounted to upwards of one hundred men, among whom were nine officers. After an engagement of extreme severity, the detachment joined the main army, which continued its march to fort Washington.

General Harmer, with what propriety it is not easy to discern, claimed the victory. He conceived, not entirely without reason, that the loss of a considerable number of men, would be fatal to the Indians, although a still greater loss should be sustained by the Americans, because the savages did not possess a population from which they could replace the warriors who had fallen. The event, however, did not justify this opinion.

The information respecting this expedition was quickly followed by intelligence stating the deplorable condition of the frontiers. An address from the representatives of all the counties of Kentucky, and those of Virginia bordering on the Ohio, was presented to the President, praying that the defence of the country might be committed to militia unmixed with regulars, and that they might immediately be drawn out to oppose "the exulting foe." To this address, the President gave a conciliatory answer, but he understood too well the nature of the service, to yield to the request it contained. Such were his communications to the legislature, that a regiment was added to the permanent military establishment, and he was authorized to raise a body of two thousand men, for six months, and to appoint a major general, and a brigadier general, to continue in command so long as he should think their services necessary.

With the 3d of March, 1791, terminated the first congress elected under the constitution of the United States. The party denominated federal having prevailed at the elections, a majority of the members were steadfast friends of the constitution, and were sincerely desirous of supporting a system they had themselves introduced, and on the preservation of which, in full health and vigour, they firmly believed the happiness of their fellow citizens, and the respectability of the nation, greatly to depend. To organize a government, to retrieve the national character, to establish a system of revenue, and to create public credit, were among the arduous duties which were imposed upon them by the political situation of their country. With persevering labour, guided by no inconsiderable portion of virtue and intelligence, these objects were, in a great degree, accomplished. Out of the measures proposed for their attainment, questions alike intricate and interesting unavoidably arose. It is not in the nature of man to discuss such questions without strongly agitating the passions, and exciting irritations which do not readily subside. Had it even been the happy and singular lot of America to see its national legislature assemble uninfluenced by those prejudices which grew out of the previous divisions of the country, the many delicate points which they were under the necessity of deciding, could not have failed to disturb this enviable state of harmony, and to mingle some share of party spirit with their deliberations. But when the actual state of the public mind was contemplated, and due weight was given to the important consideration that, at no very distant day, a successor to the present chief magistrate must be elected, it was still less to be hoped that the first congress could pass away, without producing strong and permanent dispositions in parties, to impute to each other designs unfriendly to the public happiness. As yet, however, these imputations did not extend to the President. His character was held sacred, and the purity of his motives was admitted by all. Some divisions were understood to have found their way into the cabinet. It was insinuated that between the secretaries of state and of the treasury, very serious differences had arisen; but these high personages were believed to be equally attached to the President, who was not suspected of undue partiality to either. If his assent to the bill for incorporating the national bank produced discontent, the opponents of that measure seemed disposed to ascribe his conduct, in that instance, to his judgment, rather than to any prepossession in favour of the party by whom it was carried. The opposition, therefore, in congress, to the measures of the government, seemed to be levelled at the secretary of the treasury, and at the northern members by whom those measures were generally supported, not at the President by whom they were approved. By taking this direction, it made its way into the public mind, without being encountered by that devoted affection which a great majority of the people felt for the chief magistrate of the union. In the mean time, the national prosperity was in a state of rapid progress; and the government was gaining, though slowly, in the public opinion. But in several of the state assemblies, especially in the southern division of the continent, serious evidences of dissatisfaction were exhibited, which demonstrated the jealousy with which the local sovereignties contemplated the powers exercised by the federal legislature.

CHAPTER VII

1791.

MORE ample means for the protection of the frontiers having been placed in the hands of the executive, the immediate attention of the President was directed to this interesting object.

Major General Arthur St. Clair, governor of the territory north-west of the Ohio, was appointed Commander-in-chief of the forces to be employed in the meditated expedition. This gentleman had served through the war of the revolution with reputation, though it had never been his fortune to distinguish himself. The evacuation of Ticonderoga had indeed, at one time, subjected him to much public censure; but it was found, upon inquiry, to be unmerited. Other motives, in addition to the persuasion of his fitness for the service, conduced to his appointment. With the sword, the olive branch was still to be tendered; and it was thought adviseable to place them in the same hands. The governor, having been made officially the negociator with the tribes inhabiting the territories over which he presided, being a military man, acquainted with the country into which the war was to be carried, possessing considerable influence with the inhabitants of the frontiers, and being so placed as to superintend the preparations for the expedition advantageously, seemed to have claims to the station which were not to be overlooked. It was also a consideration of some importance, that the high rank he had held in the American army, would obviate those difficulties in filling the inferior grades with men of experience, which might certainly be expected, should a person who had acted in a less elevated station, be selected for the chief command.

After making the necessary arrangements for recruiting the army, the President prepared to make his long contemplated tour through the southern states.[1] In passing through them, he was received universally with the same marks of affectionate attachment, which he had experienced in the northern and central parts of the union. To the sensibilities which these demonstrations of the regard and esteem of good men could not fail to inspire, was added the high gratification produced by observing the rapid improvements of the country, and the advances made by the government, in acquiring the confidence of the people. The numerous letters written by him after his return to Philadelphia, attest the agreeable impressions made by these causes. "In my late tour through the southern states," said he, in a letter of the 28th of July, to Mr. Gouverneur Morris, "I experienced great satisfaction in seeing the good effects of the general government in that part of the union. The people at large have felt the security which it gives, and the equal justice which it administers to them. The farmer, the merchant, and the mechanic, have seen their several interests attended to, and from thence they unite in placing a confidence in their representatives, as well as in those in whose hands the execution of the laws is placed. Industry has there taken place of idleness, and economy of dissipation. Two or three years of good crops, and a ready market for the produce of their lands, have put every one in good humour; and, in some instances, they even impute to the government what is due only to the goodness of Providence.

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[1] He stopped several days on the Potomac, where he executed finally the powers vested in him by the legislature for fixing on a place which should become the residence of congress, and the metropolis of the United States.

"The establishment of public credit is an immense point gained in our national concerns. This, I believe, exceeds the expectation of the most sanguine among us; and a late instance, unparalleled in this country, has been given of the confidence reposed in our measures, by the rapidity with which the subscriptions to the bank of the United States were filled. In two hours after the books were opened by the commissioners, the whole number of shares was taken up, and four thousand more applied for than were allowed by the institution. This circumstance was not only pleasing as it related to the confidence in government, but also as it exhibited an unexpected proof of the resources of our citizens."

This visit had undoubtedly some tendency to produce the good disposition which the President observed with so much pleasure. The affections are perhaps more intimately connected with the judgment than we are disposed to admit; and the appearance of the chief magistrate of the union, who was the object of general love and reverence, could not be without its influence in conciliating the minds of many to the government he administered, and to its measures. But this progress towards conciliation was, perhaps, less considerable than was indicated by appearances. The hostility to the government, which was coeval with its existence, though diminished, was far from being subdued; and under this smooth exterior was concealed a mass of discontent, which, though it did not obtrude itself on the view of the man who united almost all hearts, was active in its exertions to effect its objects.

The difficulties which must impede the recruiting service in a country where coercion is not employed, and where the common wages of labour greatly exceed the pay of a soldier, protracted the completion of the regiments to a late season of the year; but the summer was not permitted to waste in total inaction.

The act passed at the last session for the defence of the frontiers, in addition to its other provisions, had given to the President an unlimited power to call mounted militia into the field. Under this authority, two expeditions had been conducted against the villages on the Wabash, in which a few of the Indian warriors were killed, some of their old men, women, and children, were made prisoners, and several of their towns and fields of corn were destroyed. The first was led by General Scott, in May, and the second by General Wilkinson, in September. These desultory incursions had not much influence on the war.

It was believed in the United States, that the hostility of the Indians was kept up by the traders living in their villages. These persons had, generally, resided in the United States; and, having been compelled to leave the country in consequence of the part they had taken during the war of the revolution, felt the resentments which banishment and confiscation seldom fail to inspire. Their enmities were ascribed by many, perhaps unjustly, to the temper of the government in Canada; but some countenance seemed to be given to this opinion by intelligence that, about the commencement of the preceding campaign, large supplies of ammunition had been delivered from the British posts on the lakes, to the Indians at war with the United States. While the President was on his southern tour, he addressed a letter to the secretary of state, to be communicated to Colonel Beckwith, who still remained in Philadelphia as the informal representative of his nation, in which he expressed his surprise and disappointment at this interference, by the servants or subjects of a foreign state, in a war prosecuted by the United States for the sole purpose of procuring peace and safety for the inhabitants of their frontiers.

On receiving this communication, Colonel Beckwith expressed his disbelief that the supplies mentioned had been delivered; but on being assured of the fact, he avowed the opinion that the transaction was without the knowledge of Lord Dorchester, to whom he said he should communicate, without delay, the ideas of the American government on the subject.

On the 24th of October the second congress assembled in Philadelphia. In his speech at the opening of the session, the President expressed his great satisfaction at the prosperous situation of the country, and particularly mentioned the rapidity with which the shares in the bank of the United States were subscribed, as "among the striking and pleasing evidences which presented themselves, not only of confidence in the government, but of resources in the community."

Adverting to the measures which had been taken in execution of the laws and resolutions of the last session, "the most important of which," he observed, "respected the defence and security of the western frontiers," he had, he said, "negotiated provisional treaties, and used other proper means to attach the wavering, and to confirm in their friendship the well disposed tribes of Indians. The means which he had adopted for a pacification with those of a hostile description having proved unsuccessful, offensive operations had been directed, some of which had proved completely successful, and others were still depending. Overtures of peace were still continued to the deluded tribes; and it was sincerely to be desired that all need of coercion might cease, and that an intimate intercourse might succeed, calculated to advance the happiness of the Indians, and to attach them firmly to the United States."

In marking the line of conduct which ought to be maintained for the promotion of this object, he strongly recommended "justice to the savages, and such rational experiments for imparting to them the blessings of civilization, as might from time to time suit their condition; and then concluded this subject with saying—"A system corresponding with the mild principles of religion and philanthropy towards an unenlightened race of men whose happiness materially depends on the conduct of the United States, would be as honourable to the national character, as conformable to the dictates of sound policy."

After stating that measures had been taken for carrying into execution the act laying duties on distilled spirits, he added—"The impressions with which this law has been received by the community have been, upon the whole, such as were to have been expected among enlightened and well disposed citizens, from the propriety and necessity of the measure. The novelty however of the tax, in a considerable part of the United States, and a misconception of some of its provisions, have given occasion, in particular places, to some degree of discontent. But it is satisfactory to know that this disposition yields to proper explanations, and more just apprehensions of the true nature of the law. And I entertain a full confidence that it will, in all, give way to motives which arise out of a just sense of duty, and a virtuous regard to the public welfare.

"If there are any circumstances in the law, which, consistently with its main design may be so varied as to remove any well intentioned objections that may happen to exist, it will comport with a wise moderation to make the proper variations. It is desirable on all occasions, to unite with a steady and firm adherence to constitutional and necessary acts of government, the fullest evidence of a disposition, as far as may be practicable, to consult the wishes of every part of the community, and to lay the foundations of the public administration in the affections of the people."

The answers of the two houses noticed, briefly and generally, the various topics of the speech; and, though perhaps less warm than those of the preceding congress, manifested great respect for the executive magistrate, and an undiminished confidence in his patriotic exertions to promote the public interests.

Among the first subjects of importance which engaged the attention of the legislature, was a bill "for apportioning representatives among the people of the several states according to the first enumeration." The constitution, in its original form, had affixed no other limits to the power of congress over the numbers of which the house of representatives might consist, than that there should not be more than one member for every thirty thousand persons; but that each state should be entitled to at least one. Independent of the general considerations in favour of a more or less numerous representation in the popular branch of the legislature, there was one of a local nature, whose operation, though secret, was extensive, which gave to this question a peculiar interest. To whatever number of persons a representative might be allotted, there would still remain a fraction, which would be greater or less in each state, according to the ratio which congress should adopt between representation and population. The relative power of states, in one branch of the legislature, would consequently be affected by this ratio; and to questions of that description, few members can permit themselves to be inattentive.

This bill, as originally introduced into the house of representatives, gave to each state one member for every thirty thousand persons. On a motion to strike out the number thirty thousand, the debate turned chiefly on the policy and advantage of a more or less numerous house of representatives; but with the general arguments suggested by the subject strong and pointed allusions to the measures of the preceding congress were interspersed, which indicated much more serious hostility to the administration than had hitherto been expressed. Speaking of the corruption which he supposed to exist in the British house of commons, Mr. Giles said that causes essentially different from their numbers, had produced this effect. "Among these, were the frequent mortgages of the funds, and the immense appropriations at the disposal of the executive."

"An inequality of circumstances," he observed, "produces revolutions in governments, from democracy, to aristocracy, and monarchy. Great wealth produces a desire of distinctions, rank, and titles. The revolutions of property, in this country, have created a prodigious inequality of circumstances. Government has contributed to this inequality. The bank of the United States is a most important machine in promoting the objects of this monied interest. This bank will be the most powerful engine to corrupt this house. Some of the members are directors of this institution; and it will only be by increasing the representation, that an adequate barrier can be opposed to this monied interest." He next adverted to certain ideas, which, he said, had been disseminated through the United States. "The legislature," he took occasion to observe, "ought to express some disapprobation of these opinions. The strong executive of this government," he added, "ought to be balanced by a full representation in this house."

Similar sentiments were advanced by Mr. Findley.

After a long and animated discussion, the amendment was lost, and the bill passed in its original form.

In the senate, it was amended by changing the ratio, so as to give one representative for every thirty-three thousand persons in each state; but this amendment was disagreed to by the house of representatives; and each house adhering to its opinion, the bill fell; but was again introduced into the house of representatives, under a different title, and in a new form, though without any change in its substantial provisions. After a debate in which the injustice of the fractions produced by the ratio it adopted was strongly pressed, it passed that house. In the senate, it was again amended, not by reducing, but by enlarging the number of representatives.

The constitution of the United States declares that "representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several states which may be included within this union according to their respective numbers;" and that "the number of representatives shall not exceed one for every thirty thousand, but each state shall have at least one representative." Construing the constitution to authorize a process by which the whole number of representatives should be ascertained on the whole population of the United States, and afterwards "apportioned among the several states according to their respective numbers," the senate applied the number thirty thousand as a *divisor* to the total population, and taking the *quotient,* which was one hundred and twenty, as the number of representatives given by the ratio which had been adopted in the house where the bill had originated, they apportioned that number among the several states by that ratio, until as many representatives as it would give were allotted to each. The residuary members were then distributed among the states having the highest fractions. Without professing the principle on which this apportionment was made, the amendment of the senate merely allotted to the states respectively, the number of members which the process just mentioned would give. The result was a more equitable apportionment of representatives to population, and had the rule of construing that instrument been correct, the amendment removed objections which were certainly well founded. But the rule was novel, and overturned opinions which had been generally assumed, and were supposed to be settled. In one branch of the legislature it had already been rejected; and in the other, the majority in its favour was only one.

In the house of representatives, the amendment was supported with considerable ingenuity.

After an earnest debate, however, it was disagreed to, and a conference took place without producing an accommodation among the members composing the committee. But finally, the house of representatives receded from their disagreement; and, by a majority of two voices, the bill passed as amended in the senate.

On the President, the solemn duty of deciding, whether an act of the legislature consisted with the constitution; for the bill, if constitutional, was unexceptionable.

In his cabinet, also, a difference of opinion is understood to have existed; the secretary of state and the attorney general were of opinion that the act was at variance with the constitution; the secretary at war was rather undecided; and the secretary of the treasury, thinking that, from the vagueness of expression in the clause relating to the subject, neither construction could be absolutely rejected, was in favour of acceding to the interpretation given by the legislature.

After weighing the arguments which were urged on each side of the question, the President was confirmed in the opinion that the population of each state, and not the total population of the United States, must give the numbers to which alone the process by which the number of representatives was to be ascertained should be applied. Having formed this opinion, to a correct and independent mind the course to be pursued was a plain one. Duty required the exercise of a power which a President of the United States will always find much difficulty in employing; and he returned the bill to the house in which it originated, accompanied with his objections[1] to it. In observance of the forms prescribed in the constitution, the question was then taken on its passage by ayes and noes, and it was rejected. A third bill was soon afterwards introduced, apportioning the representatives on the several states at a ratio of one for every thirty-three thousand persons in each state, which passed into a law. Thus was this interesting part of the American constitution finally settled.

During this session of congress, an act passed for establishing a uniform militia.

The President had manifested, from the commencement of his administration, a peculiar degree of solicitude on this subject, and had repeatedly urged it on congress.

In his speech at the opening of the present session, he again called the attention of the legislature to it; and, at length, a law was enacted which, though less efficacious than the plan reported by the secretary of war, will probably, not soon, be carried into complete execution.

In December, intelligence was received by the President, and immediately communicated to congress, that the American army had been totally defeated on the fourth of the preceding month.

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[1] The following is the message which he delivered on this occasion.

Gentlemen of the house of representatives—

I have maturely considered the act passed by the two houses, entitled "an act for the apportionment of representatives among the several states according to the first enumeration," and I return it to your house, wherein it originated, with the following objections.

First. The constitution has prescribed that representatives shall be apportioned among the several states according to their respective numbers, and there is no proportion or divisor which, applied to the respective numbers of the states, will yield the number and allotment of representatives proposed by the bill.

Secondly. The constitution has also provided, that the number of representatives shall not exceed one for thirty thousand, which restriction is by the context, and by fair and obvious construction, to be applied to the separate and respective numbers of the states, and the bill has allotted to eight of the states more than one for thirty thousand.

Although the most prompt and judicious measures had been taken to raise the troops, and to march them to the frontiers, they could not be assembled in the neighbourhood of fort Washington until the month of September, nor was the establishment even then completed.

The immediate objects of the expedition were, to destroy the Indian villages on the Miamis, to expel the savages from that country, and to connect it with the Ohio by a chain of posts which would prevent their return during the war.

On the seventh of September, the regulars moved from their camp in the vicinity of fort Washington, and marching directly north, towards the object of their destination, established two intermediate posts[1] at the distance of rather more than forty miles from each other, as places of deposite, and of security either for convoys of provision which might follow the army, or for the army itself should any disaster befall it. The last of these works, fort Jefferson, was not completed until the 24th of October, before which time reinforcements were received of about three hundred and sixty militia. After placing garrisons in the forts, the effective number of the army, including militia, amounted to rather less than two thousand men. With this force, the general continued his march, which was rendered both slow and laborious by the necessity of opening a road. Small parties of Indians were frequently seen hovering about them, and some unimportant skirmishes took place. As the army approached the country in which they might expect to meet an enemy, about sixty of the militia deserted in a body. This diminution of force was not, in itself, an object of much concern. But there was reason to fear that the example, should those who set it be permitted to escape with impunity, would be extensively followed; and it was reported to be the intention of the deserters, to plunder convoys of provisions which were advancing at some distance in the rear. To prevent mischiefs of so serious a nature, the general detached Major Hamtranck with the first regiment in pursuit of the deserters, and directed him to secure the provisions under a strong guard.

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[1] Forts Hamilton and Jefferson.

The army, consisting of about fourteen hundred effective rank and file, continued its march; and, on the third of November, encamped about fifteen miles south of the Miamis villages. The right wing under the command of General Butler formed the first line, and lay with a creek, about twelve yards wide, immediately in its front. The left wing commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Darke, formed the second; and between the two lines, was an interval of about seventy yards.[1] The right flank was supposed to be secured by the creek, by a steep bank, and by a small body of troops, the left was covered by a party of cavalry, and by piquets. The militia crossed the creek, and advanced about a quarter of a mile in front, where they also encamped in two lines. On their approach, a few Indians who had shown themselves on the opposite side of the creek, fled with precipitation.

At this place, the general intended to throw up a slight work for the security of the baggage; and, after being joined by Major Hamtranck, to march as unincumbered, and as expeditiously as possible, to the villages he purposed to destroy.

In both these designs he was anticipated. About half an hour before sun rise the next morning, just after the troops had been dismissed from the parade, an unexpected attack was made upon the militia, who fled in the utmost confusion, and rushing into camp through the first line of continental troops, which had been formed the instant the first gun was discharged, threw them too into disorder. The exertions of the officers to restore order were not entirely successful. The Indians pressed close upon the heels of the flying militia, and engaged General Butler with great intrepidity. The action instantly became extremely warm; and the fire of the assailants, passing round both flanks of the first line, was, in a few minutes, poured with equal fury on the rear division. Its greatest weight was directed against the centre of each wing, where the artillery was posted; and the artillerists were mowed down in great numbers. Firing from the ground, and from the shelter which the woods afforded, the assailants were scarcely seen but when springing from one cover to another, in which manner they advanced close up to the American lines, and to the very mouths of the field pieces. They fought with the daring courage of men whose trade is war, and who are stimulated by all those passions which can impel the savage mind to vigorous exertions.

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[1] In his official letter, General St. Clair says that the ground would not admit a larger interval.

Under circumstances thus arduous, raw troops may be expected to exhibit that inequality which is found in human nature. While some of the American soldiers performed their duty with the utmost resolution, others seemed dismayed and terrified. Of this conduct the officers were, as usual, the victims. With a fearlessness which the occasion required, they exposed themselves to the most imminent dangers; and, in their efforts to change the face of affairs, fell in great numbers.

For several days, the Commander-in-chief had been afflicted with a severe disease, under which he still laboured, and which must have greatly affected him; but, though unable to display that activity which would have been useful in this severe conflict, neither the feebleness of his body, nor the peril of his situation, could prevent his delivering his orders with judgment and with self possession.[1]

It was soon perceived that the American fire could produce, on a concealed enemy, no considerable effect; and that the only hope of victory was placed in the bayonet. At the head of the second regiment, which formed the left of the left wing, Lieutenant Colonel Darke made an impetuous charge upon the enemy, forced them from their ground with some loss, and drove them about four hundred yards. He was followed by that whole wing; but the want of a sufficient number of riflemen to press this advantage, deprived him of the benefit which ought to have been derived from this effort; and, as soon as he gave over the pursuit, the Indians renewed their attack.

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[1] The following extract from the official letter of the Commander-in-chief is inserted, as showing both his own situation and his opinion of the behaviour of his troops. "I have nothing, sir, to lay to the charge of the troops but their want of discipline, which, from the short time they had been in service, it was impossible they should have acquired; and which rendered it very difficult when they were thrown into confusion, to reduce them again to order; and is one reason why the loss has fallen so heavily upon the officers who did every thing in their power to effect it. Neither were my own exertions wanting; but worn down with illness, and suffering under a painful disease, unable either to mount, or dismount a horse without assistance, they were not so great as they otherwise would, or perhaps ought to have been.

In the mean time General Butler was mortally wounded, the left of the right wing was broken, the artillerists almost to a man killed, the guns seized, and the camp penetrated by the enemy. With his own regiment, and with the battalions commanded by Majors Butler[1] and Clarke, Darke was ordered again to charge with the bayonet. These orders were executed with intrepidity and momentary success. The Indians were driven out of the camp, and the artillery recovered. But while they were pressed in one point by the bravest of the American troops, their fire was kept up from every other with fatal effect. Several times particular corps charged them, always with partial success, but no universal effort could be made, and in every charge a great loss of officers was sustained, the consequences of which were severely felt. Instead of keeping their ranks, and executing the orders which were given, a great proportion of the soldiers flocked together in crowds, and were shot down without resistance. To save the remnant of his army was all that remained to be done; and, about half past nine in the morning, General St. Clair ordered Lieutenant Colonel Darke with the second regiment, to charge a body of Indians who had intercepted their retreat, and to gain the road. Major Clarke with his battalion was directed to cover the rear. These orders were executed, and a disorderly flight commenced. The pursuit was kept up about four miles, when, fortunately for the surviving Americans, that avidity for plunder which is a ruling passion among savages, called back the victorious Indians to the camp, where the spoils of their vanquished foes were to be divided. The routed troops continued their flight to fort Jefferson, a distance of about thirty miles, throwing away their arms on the road. At this place they met Major Hamtranck with the first regiment; and a council of war was called to deliberate on the course to be pursued. As this regiment was far from restoring the strength of the morning, it was determined not to attempt to retrieve the fortune of the day: and, leaving the wounded at fort Jefferson, the army continued its retreat to fort Washington.

In this disastrous battle, the loss on the part of the Americans was very great when compared with the numbers engaged. Thirty-eight commissioned officers were killed upon the field, and five hundred and ninety-three non-commissioned officers and privates were slain and missing. Twenty-one commissioned officers, several of whom afterwards died of their wounds, and two hundred and forty-two non-commissioned officers and privates were wounded. Among the dead was the brave and much lamented General Butler. This gallant officer had served through the war of the revolution; and had, on more than one occasion, distinguished himself in a remarkable manner. In the list of those who shared his fate, were the names of many other excellent officers who had participated in all the toils, the dangers, and the glory, of that long conflict which terminated in the independence of their country. At the head of the list of wounded were Lieutenant Colonels Gibson and Darke, Major Butler, and Adjutant General Sargent, all of whom were veteran officers of great merit, who displayed their accustomed bravery on this unfortunate day. General St. Clair, in his official letter, observed; "the loss the public has sustained by the fall of so many officers, particularly of General Butler and Major Ferguson, can not be too much regretted, but it is a circumstance that will alleviate the misfortune in some measure, that all of them fell most gallantly doing their duty."

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[1] Although his leg had been broken by a ball, Major Butler, mounted on horseback, led his battalion to the charge.

From the weight of the fire, and the circumstance of his being attacked nearly at the same time in front and rear, General St. Clair was of opinion that he was overpowered by numbers. The intelligence afterwards collected would make the Indian force to consist of from one thousand to fifteen hundred warriors. Of their loss, no estimate could be made; the probability is, that it bore no proportion to that sustained by the American army.

Nothing could be more unexpected than this severe disaster. The public had confidently anticipated a successful campaign, and could not believe, that the general who had been unfortunate, had not been culpable.

The Commander-in-chief requested with earnestness that a court martial should sit on his conduct; but this request could not be granted, because the army did not furnish a sufficient number of officers of a grade to form a court for his trial on military principles. Late in the session, a committee of the house of representatives was appointed to inquire into the cause of the failure of the expedition, whose report, in explicit terms, exculpated the Commander-in-chief. This inquiry, however, was instituted rather for the purpose of investigating the conduct of civil than of military officers; and was not conducted by military men. More satisfactory testimony in favour of St. Clair is furnished by the circumstance, that he still retained the undiminished esteem and good opinion of the President. 1792

The Indian war now assumed a still more serious aspect. There was reason to fear that the hostile tribes would derive a great accession of strength from the impression which their success would make upon their neighbours; and the reputation of the government was deeply concerned in retrieving the fortune of its arms, and affording protection to its citizens. The President, therefore, lost no time in causing the estimates for a competent force to be prepared and laid before congress. In conformity with a report made by the secretary of war, a bill was brought into the house of representatives, directing three additional regiments of infantry, and a squadron of cavalry to be raised, to serve for three years, if not sooner discharged. The whole military establishment, if completed, would amount to about five thousand men. The additional regiments, however, were to be disbanded as soon as peace should be concluded with the Indians; and the President was authorized to discharge, or to forbear to raise, any part of them, "in case events should, in his judgment, render his so doing consistent with the public safety."

This bill met with great opposition. A motion was made to strike out the section which authorized an augmentation of force. By those who argued in favour of the motion, the justice of the war was arraigned, and the practicability of obtaining peace at a much less expense than would be incurred in its further prosecution, was urged with vehemence. An extension of the present frontier was said not to be desirable, and if the citizens of the United States were recalled within their proper boundaries, hostilities would cease. At any rate, it was an idle waste of blood and treasure, to carry the war beyond the line of forts already established. It was only exposing their arms to disgrace, betraying their own weakness, and lessening the public confidence in the government, to send forth armies to be butchered in the forests, while the British were suffered to keep possession of posts within the territory of the United States. To this cause was to be ascribed any disposition which might exist on the part of the Indians to continue hostilities, and to its removal the efforts of the government ought to be directed.

But, admitting the war to have been just in its commencement, and its continuance to be required by the honour and interest of the nation, yet as an invasion of the Indian country ought not to be attempted, this augmentation of the military establishment could not be necessary. Regular troops could only be useful as garrisons for posts to which the militia might resort for protection or supplies. Experience had proved that the sudden desultory attacks of the frontier militia and rangers were productive of more valuable consequences, than the methodical operations of a regular force. But, should it even be conceded that invasion and conquest were to be contemplated, the existing establishment, if completed, would be sufficiently great; and it was still insisted that, even for the purposes of conquest, the frontier militia were superior to any regulars whatever.

The expense of such an army as the bill contemplated was said to be an object worthy of serious attention; and members were requested to observe the progress of this business, and to say where it would stop. At first, only a single regiment had been raised, and the expense was about one hundred thousand dollars; a second was afterwards added, which swelled the expense to three hundred thousand; and now a standing force of five thousand one hundred and sixty-eight men is contemplated, at an annual expense of above a million and a quarter. They were preparing to squander away money by millions; and no one, except those who were in the secrets of the cabinet, knew why the war had been thus carried on for three years.

Against the motion for striking out, it was urged that the justice of the war could not be questioned by any man who would allow that self preservation, and indispensable necessity, could furnish sufficient motives for taking up arms. It was proved by unquestionable documents, that from the year 1783 to 1790, there had been not less than fifteen hundred persons, either the inhabitants of Kentucky, or emigrants on their way to that country, who had been massacred by the savages, or dragged into captivity; and there was reason to believe that on the frontiers of Virginia, and of Pennsylvania, the murdered and the prisoners would furnish a list almost equally numerous.

The conciliatory disposition of the government was stated, and its repeated efforts to obtain a peace were enumerated. It was particularly observed that in 1790, when a treaty was proposed at the Miamis villages, the Indians at first refused to treat;—they next required thirty days to deliberate;—this request was acceded to; and, in the interim, offensive operations were expressly prohibited by the President. Yet, notwithstanding this forbearance on the part of the whites, not less than one hundred and twenty persons were killed and captured by the savages, and several prisoners were roasted alive, during that short period; at the expiration of which, the Indians refused to give any answer to the proposition which had been made to them.

But it was now too late to inquire into the justice of the principles on which the war was originally undertaken. The nation was involved in it, and could not recede without exposing many innocent persons to be butchered by the enemy. Should the government determine to discontinue the war, would the Indians also consent to a cessation of hostilities? The government could not, without impeachment, both of its justice and humanity, abandon the inhabitants of the frontiers to the rage of their savage enemies; and although the excise might be unpopular, although money might still be wanted, what was the excise, what was money, when put in competition with the lives of their friends and brethren? A sufficient force must be raised for their defence, and the only question was what that force should be.

The calculations of the best informed men were in favour of employing an army not inferior to that proposed in the bill. When the known attachment of Indians to war and plunder was adverted to, and the excitements to that attachment which were furnished by the trophies acquired in the two last campaigns were considered, no man would venture to pronounce with confidence how extensive the combination against the United States might become, or what numbers they would have to encounter. It certainly behoved them to prepare in time for a much more vigorous effort than had hitherto been made. The objections drawn from the increased expense which such an effort would require, must entirely vanish before the eyes of any man, who looks forward to the consequences of another unsuccessful campaign. Such a disaster would eventually involve the nation in much greater expense than that which is now made the ground of opposition. Better therefore is it, to make at once a vigorous and effectual exertion to bring the contest to a close, than to continue gradually draining the treasury, by dragging on the war, and renewing hostility from year to year.

The supporters of the bill also appealed to experience for the superiority of regular troops over militia, in accomplishing all the purposes, even of Indian war; and those arguments were urged in favour of this theory, which the subject readily suggests.

The motion for striking out the section was lost; and the bill was carried for the augmentation of force required by the executive.

The treasury was not in a condition to meet the demands upon it, which the increased expenses of the war would unavoidably occasion; and sources of additional revenue were to be explored. A select committee to whom this subject was referred, brought in a resolution directing the secretary of the treasury to report his opinion to the house on the best mode of raising those additional supplies which the public service might require for the current year.

This proposition gave rise to a very animated debate.

It will be recollected that when the act for establishing the treasury department was under consideration, the clause which rendered it the duty of the secretary to digest and report plans for the improvement and management of the revenue, and for the support of public credit, was earnestly opposed. A large majority however was in favour of the principle; and, after being so modified, as only to admit a report if required by the house, it was retained in the bill. In complying with the various resolutions of congress, calling for reports on subjects connected with his department, the secretary had submitted plans which, having been profoundly considered, were well digested, and accompanied by arguments, the force of which it was difficult to resist. His measures were generally supported by a majority of congress; and, while the high credit of the United States was believed to attest their wisdom, the masterly manner in which his reports were drawn contributed to raise still higher, that reputation for great talents which he had long possessed. To the further admission of these reports, it was determined, on this occasion, to make a vigorous resistance.

But the opposition was not successful. On taking the question, the resolution was carried; thirty-one members voting in its favour, and twenty-seven against it.

The report[1] made by the secretary in pursuance of this resolution, recommended certain augmentations of the duties on imports; and was immediately referred to the consideration of a committee of the whole house. Resolutions were then passed which were to form the basis of a bill; and which adopted, not only the principles, but, with the exception of a few unimportant alterations, the minute details of the report.

Before the question was taken on the bill, a motion was made to limit its duration, the vote upon which strongly marked the progress of opinion in the house respecting those systems of finance which were believed to have established the credit of the United States.

The secretary of the treasury had deemed it indispensable to the creation of public credit, that the appropriations of funds for the payment of the interest, and the gradual redemption of the principal of the national debt, should be not only sufficient, but permanent also. A party was found in the first congress who opposed this principle; and were in favour of retaining a full power over the subject in each branch of the legislature, by making annual appropriations. The arguments which had failed in congress appear to have been more successfully employed with the people. Among the multiplied vices which were ascribed to the funding system, it was charged with introducing a permanent and extensive mortgage of funds, which was alleged to strengthen unduly the hands of the executive magistrate, and to be one of the many evidences which existed, of monarchical propensities in those who administered the government.

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[1] See note, No. VI. at the end of the volume.

The report lately made by the secretary of the treasury, and the bill founded on that report, contemplated a permanent increase of the duties on certain specified articles; and a permanent appropriation of the revenue arising from them, to the purposes of the national debt. Thirty-one members were in favour of the motion for limiting the duration of the bill, and only thirty against it. By the rules of the house, the speaker has a right first to vote as a member; and, if the numbers should then be equally divided, to decide as speaker. Being opposed to the limitation, the motion was lost by his voice.

On the eighth of May, after an active and interesting session, congress adjourned to the first Monday in November.

The asperity which, on more than one occasion, discovered itself in debate, was a certain index of the growing exasperation of parties; and the strength of the opposition on those questions which brought into review the points on which the administration was to be attacked, denoted the impression which the specific charges brought against those who conducted public affairs, had made on the minds of the people, in an extensive division of the continent. It may conduce to a more perfect understanding of subsequent transactions, to present, in this place, a sketch of those charges.

It was alleged that the public debt was too great to be paid before other causes of adding to it would occur. This accumulation of debt had been artificially produced by the assumption of what was due from the states. Its immediate effect was to deprive the government of its power over those easy sources of revenue, which, applied to its ordinary necessities and exigencies, would have answered them habitually, and thereby have avoided those burdens on the people which occasioned such murmurs against taxes, and tax gatherers. As a consequence of it, although the calls for money had not been greater than must be expected for the same or equivalent exigencies, yet congress had been already obliged, not only to strain the impost until it produced clamour, and would produce evasion, and war on their own citizens to collect it, but even to resort to an *excise* law, of odious character with the people, partial in its operation, unproductive unless enforced by arbitrary and vexatious means, and committing the authority of the government in parts where resistance was most probable, and coercion least practicable.

That the United States, if left free to act at their discretion, might borrow at two-thirds of the interest contracted to be paid to the public creditors, and thus discharge themselves from the principle in two-thirds of the time: but from this they were precluded by the irredeemable quality of the debt; a quality given for the avowed purpose of inviting its transfer to foreign countries. This transfer of the principal when completed would occasion an exportation of three millions of dollars annually for the interest, a drain of coin without example, and of the consequences of which no calculation could be made.

The banishment of coin would be completed by ten millions of paper money in the form of bank bills, which were then issuing into circulation. Nor would this be the only mischief resulting from the institution of the bank. The ten or twelve per cent. annual profit paid to the lenders of this paper medium would take out of the pockets of the people, who would have had, without interest, the coin it was banishing. That all the capital employed in paper speculation is barren and useless, producing like that on a gaming table no accession to itself, and is withdrawn from commerce and agriculture, where it would have produced addition to the common mass. The wealth therefore heaped upon individuals by the funding and banking systems, would be productive of general poverty and distress. That in addition to the encouragement these measures gave to vice and idleness, they had furnished effectual means of corrupting such a portion of the legislature as turned the balance between the honest voters. This corrupt squad, deciding the voice of the legislature, had manifested their dispositions to get rid of the limitations imposed by the constitution;

limitations on the faith of which the states acceded to that instrument. They were proceeding rapidly in their plan of absorbing all power, invading the rights of the states, and converting the federal into a consolidated government.

That the ultimate object of all this was to prepare the way for a change from the present republican form of government to that of a monarchy, of which the English constitution was to be the model. So many of the friends of monarchy were in the legislature, that, aided by the corrupt squad of paper dealers who were at their devotion, they made a majority in both houses. The republican party, even when united with the anti-federalists, continued a minority.

That of all the mischiefs resulting from the system of measures which was so much reprobated, none was so afflicting, so fatal to every honest hope, as the corruption of the legislature. As it was the earliest of these measures, it became the instrument for producing the rest, and would be the instrument for producing in future, a king, lords, and commons; or whatever else those who directed it might choose. Withdrawn such a distance from the eye of their constituents, they would form the most corrupt government on earth, if the means of their corruption were not prevented.

These strictures on the conduct of administration were principally directed against measures which had originated with the secretary of the treasury, and had afterwards received the sanction of the legislature. In the southern division of the continent, that officer was unknown, except to a few military friends, and to those who had engaged in the legislative or executive departments of the former or present government. His systems of revenue having been generally opposed by the southern members, and the original opposition to the constitution having been particularly great in Virginia and North Carolina, the aspersions on his views, and on the views of the eastern members by whom his plans had been generally supported, were seldom controverted. The remote tendency of particular systems, and the motives for their adoption, are so often subjects of conjecture, that the judgment, when exercised upon them, is peculiarly exposed to the influence of the passions; and where measures are in themselves burdensome, and the necessity for their adoption has not been appreciated, suspicions of their unknown advocates, can seldom be unsuccessfully urged by persons, in whom the people have placed their confidence. It is not therefore cause of astonishment, that the dark motives ascribed to the authors of tax laws, should be extensively believed.

Throughout the United States, the party opposed to the constitution had charged its supporters with a desire to establish a monarchy on the ruins of republican government; and the constitution itself was alleged to contain principles which would prove the truth of this charge. The leaders of that party had, therefore, been ready from the instant the government came into operation, to discover, in all its measures, those monarchical tendencies which they had perceived in the instrument they opposed.

The salaries allowed to public officers, though so low[1] as not to afford a decent maintenance to those who resided at the seat of government, were declared to be so enormously high, as clearly to manifest a total disregard of that simplicity and economy which were the characteristics of republics.

The levees of the President, and the evening parties of Mrs. Washington, were said to be imitations of regal institutions, designed to accustom the American people to the pomp and manners of European courts. The Vice President too was said to keep up the state and dignity of a monarch, and to illustrate, by his conduct, the principles which were inculcated in his political works.

The Indian war they alleged was misconducted, and unnecessarily prolonged for the purposes of expending the public money, and of affording a pretext for augmenting the military establishment, and increasing the revenue.

All this prodigal waste of the money of the people was designed to keep up the national debt, and the influence it gave the government, which, united with standing armies, and immense revenues, would enable their rulers to rivet the chains which they were secretly forging. Every prediction which had been uttered respecting the anti-republican principles of the government, was said to be rapidly verifying, and that which was disbelieved as prophecy, was daily becoming history. If a remedy for these ills was not found in the increased representation of the people which would take place at the ensuing elections, they would become too monstrous to be borne; and when it was recollected that the division of opinion was marked by a geographical line, there was reason to fear that the union would be broken into one or more confederacies.

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[1] The salary of the secretary of state, which was the highest, was three thousand five hundred dollars.

These irritable symptoms had assumed appearances of increased malignity during the session of congress which had just terminated; and, to the President, who firmly believed that the union and the liberty of the states depended on the preservation of the government, they were the more unpleasant and the more alarming, because they were displayed in full force in his cabinet.

Between the secretaries of the state and treasury departments, a disagreement existed, which seems to have originated in an early stage of the administration, and to have acquired a regular accession of strength from circumstances which were perpetually occurring, until it grew into open and irreconcileable hostility.

Without tracing this disagreement to those motives, which, in elective governments especially, often produce enmities between distinguished personages, neither of whom acknowledges the superiority of the other, such radical differences of opinion, on points which would essentially influence the course of the government, were supposed to exist between the secretaries, as, in a great measure, to account for this unextinguishable enmity. These differences of opinion were, perhaps, to be ascribed, in some measure, to a difference in the original structure of their minds, and, in some measure, to the difference of the situations in which they had been placed.

Until near the close of the war, Mr. Hamilton had served his country in the field; and, just before its termination, had passed from the camp into congress, where he remained for some time after peace had been established. In the former station, the danger to which the independence of his country was exposed from the imbecility of its government was perpetually before his eyes; and, in the latter, his attention was forcibly directed towards the loss of its reputation, and the sacrifice of its best interests, which were to be ascribed to the same cause. Mr. Hamilton, therefore, was the friend of a government which should possess, in itself, sufficient powers and resources to maintain the character, and defend the integrity of the nation. Having long felt and witnessed the mischiefs produced by the absolute sovereignty of the states, and by the control which they were enabled and disposed separately to exercise over every measure of general concern, he was particularly apprehensive of danger from that quarter; which he, probably, believed was to be the more dreaded, because the habits and feelings of the American people were calculated to inspire state, rather than national prepossessions. Under the influence of these impressions, he is understood to have avowed opinions in the convention favourable to a system in which the executive and senate, though elective, were to be rather more permanent, than they were rendered in that which was actually proposed. He afterwards supported the constitution, as framed, with great ability, and contributed essentially to its adoption. But he still retained, and openly avowed, the opinion, that the greatest hazards to which it was exposed arose from its weakness, and that American liberty and happiness had much more to fear from the encroachments of the great states, than from those of the general government.

Mr. Jefferson had retired from congress before the depreciation of the currency had produced an entire dependence of the general on the local governments; after which he filled the highest offices in the state of which he was a citizen. About the close of the war he was re-elected to congress; but was soon afterwards employed on a mission to the court of Versailles, where he remained, while the people of France were taking the first steps of that immense revolution which has astonished and agitated two quarters of the world. In common with all his countrymen, he felt a strong interest in favour of the reformers; and it is not unreasonable to suppose, that while residing at that court, and associating with those who meditated some of the great events which have since taken place, his mind might be warmed with the abuses of the monarchy which were perpetually in his view, and he might be led to the opinion that liberty could sustain no danger but from the executive power. Mr. Jefferson, therefore, seems to have entertained no apprehensions from the debility of the government; no jealousy of the state sovereignties; and no suspicion of their encroachments. His fears took a different direction, and all his precautions were used to check and limit the exercise of the powers vested in the government of the United States. Neither could he perceive danger to liberty except from that government, and especially from the executive department.

He did not feel so sensibly, as those who had continued in the United States, the necessity of adopting the constitution; and had, at one time, avowed a wish that it might be rejected by such a number of states as would secure certain alterations which he thought essential. His principal objections seem to have been, the want of a bill of rights, and the re-eligibility of the President. From this opinion, however, in favour of a partial rejection, he is understood to have receded, after seeing the plan pursued by the convention of Massachusetts, and followed by other states; which was to adopt unconditionally, and to annex a recommendation of the amendments which were desired.[1]

To these causes of division, another was superadded, the influence of which was soon felt in all the political transactions of the government.

The war which was terminated in 1783, had left in the bosoms of the American people, a strong attachment to France, and enmity to Great Britain. These feelings, in a greater or less degree, were perhaps universal; and had been prevented from subsiding by circumstances to which allusions have already been made. They had evinced themselves, in the state legislatures, by commercial regulations; and were demonstrated by all those means by which the public sentiment is usually displayed. They found their way also into the national councils, where they manifested themselves in the motions respecting the favours which ought to be shown to nations having commercial treaties with the United States.

Although affection for France, and jealousy of Britain, were sentiments common to the people of America, the same unanimity did not exist respecting the influence which ought to be allowed to those sentiments, over the political conduct of the nation. While many favoured such discriminations as might eventually turn the commerce of the United States into new channels, others maintained that, on this subject, equality ought to be observed; that trade ought to be guided by the judgment of individuals, and that no sufficient motives existed for that sacrifice of general and particular interests, which was involved in the discriminations proposed;—discriminations which, in their view, amounted to a tax on American agriculture, and a bounty on the navigation and manufactures of a favoured foreign nation.

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[1] See Mr. Jefferson's correspondence, vol. ii. p. 266, 269, 273, 278, 303, 343, 381.

The former opinion was taken up with warmth by the secretary of state; and the latter was adopted with equal sincerity by the secretary of the treasury. This contrariety of sentiment respecting commercial regulations was only a part of a general system. It extended itself to all the relations which might subsist between America and those two great powers.

In all popular governments, the press is the most ready channel by which the opinions and the passions of the few are communicated to the many; and of the press, the two great parties forming in the United States, sought to avail themselves. The Gazette of the United States supported the systems of the treasury department, while other papers enlisted themselves under the banners of the opposition. Conspicuous among these, was the National Gazette, a paper edited by a clerk in the department of state. The avowed purpose for which the secretary patronised this paper, was to present to the eye of the American people, European intelligence derived from the Leyden gazette, instead of English papers; but it soon became the vehicle of calumny against the funding and banking systems, against the duty on home-made spirits, which was denominated an excise, and against the men who had proposed and supported those measures. With perhaps equal asperity, the papers attached to the party which had defended these systems, assailed the motives of the leaders of the opposition.

This schism in his cabinet was a subject of extreme mortification to the President. Entertaining a high respect for the talents, and a real esteem for the characters, of both gentlemen, he was unwilling to part with either; and exerted all the influence he possessed to effect a reconciliation between them. In a letter of the 23d of August, addressed to the secretary of state, after reviewing the critical situation of the United States with respect to its external relations, he thus expressed himself on this delicate subject. "How unfortunate and how much is it to be regretted then, that, while we are encompassed on all sides with avowed enemies, and insidious friends, internal dissensions should be harassing and tearing our vitals. The last, to me, is the most serious, the most alarming, and the most afflicting of the two; and, without more charity for the opinions of one another in governmental matters, or some more infallible criterion by which the truth of speculative opinions, before they have undergone the test of experience, are to be forejudged, than has yet fallen to the lot of fallibility, I believe it will be difficult, if not impracticable, to manage the reins of government, or to keep the parts of it together: for, if, instead of laying our shoulders to the machine, after measures are decided on, one pulls this way, and another that, before the utility of the thing is fairly tried, it must inevitably be torn asunder; and, in my opinion, the fairest prospect of happiness and prosperity that ever was presented to man will be lost, perhaps, for ever.

"My earnest wish and my fondest hope therefore is, that instead of wounding suspicions, and irritating charges, there may be liberal allowances, mutual forbearances, and temporising yielding on all sides. Under the exercise of these, matters will go on smoothly; and if possible, more prosperously. Without them, every thing must rub; the wheels of government will clog; our enemies will triumph; and, by throwing their weight into the disaffected scale, may accomplish the ruin of the goodly fabric we have been erecting."

"I do not mean to apply this advice, or these observations, to any particular person or character. I have given them in the same general terms to other officers[1] of the government, because the disagreements which have arisen from difference of opinions, and the attacks which have been made upon almost all the measures of government, and most of its executive officers, have for a long time past filled me with painful sensations, and can not fail, I think, of producing unhappy consequences, at home and abroad."

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[1] See note, No. VII. at the end of the volume.

In a subsequent letter to the same gentleman, in answer to one which enclosed some documents designed to prove that, though desirous of amending the constitution, he had favoured its adoption, the President said—"I did not require the evidence of the extracts which you enclosed me, to convince me of your attachment to the constitution of the United States, or of your disposition to promote the general welfare of this country; but I regret, deeply regret, the difference of opinion which has arisen, and divided you and another principal officer of the government—and wish devoutly there could be an accommodation of them by mutual yieldings.

"A measure of this sort would produce harmony and consequent good in our public councils; and the contrary will inevitably produce confusion and serious mischiefs—and for what? because mankind can not think alike, but would adopt different means to attain the same end. For I will frankly and solemnly declare that I believe the views of both to be pure and well meant, and that experience only will decide with respect to the salubrity of the measures which are the subjects of this dispute.

"Why then, when some of the best citizens of the United States—men of discernment—uniform and tried patriots—who have no sinister views to promote, but are chaste in their ways of thinking and acting, are to be found some on one side, and some on the other of the questions which have caused these agitations—why should either of you be so tenacious of your opinions as to make no allowance for those of the other?

"I could, and indeed was about to add more on this interesting subject, but will forbear, at least for the present, after expressing a wish that the cup which has been presented to us may not be snatched from our lips by a discordance of action, when I am persuaded there is no discordance in your views. I have a great, a sincere esteem and regard for you both; and ardently wish that some line could be marked out by which both of you could walk."

These earnest endeavours to sooth the angry passions, and to conciliate the jarring discords of the cabinet, were unsuccessful. The hostility which was so much and so sincerely lamented sustained no diminution, and its consequences became every day more diffusive.

Among the immediate effects of these internal dissensions, was the encouragement they afforded to a daring and criminal resistance which was made to the execution of the laws imposing a duty on spirits distilled within the United States.

To the inhabitants of that part of Pennsylvania which lies west of the Alleghany mountains, this duty was, from local considerations, peculiarly odious; nor was their hostility to the measure diminished by any affection for the source in which it originated. The constitution itself had encountered the most decided opposition from that part of the state; and that early enmity to the government which exerted every faculty to prevent its adoption, had sustained no abatement. Its measures generally, and the whole system of finance particularly, had been reprobated with peculiar bitterness by many of the most popular men of that district. With these dispositions, a tax law, the operation of which was extended to them, could not be favourably received, however generally it might be supported in other parts of the union. But when, to this pre-existing temper, were superadded the motives which arose from perceiving that the measure was censured on the floor of congress as unnecessary and tyrannical; that resistance to its execution was treated as probable; that a powerful and active party, pervading the union, arraigned with extreme acrimony the whole system of finance as being hostile to liberty; and, with all the passionate vehemence of conviction, charged its advocates with designing to subvert the republican institutions of America; we ought not to be surprised that the awful impressions, which usually restrain combinations to resist the laws, were lessened; and that the malcontents were emboldened to hope that those combinations might be successful.

Some discontents had been manifested in several parts of the union on the first introduction of the act; but the prudence and firmness of the government and its officers had dissipated them; and the law had been carried into general operation. But in the western district of Pennsylvania, the resistance wore the appearance of system, and was regularly progressive. In its commencement, it manifested itself by the circulation of opinions calculated to increase the odium in which the duty was held, and by endeavours to defeat its collection by directing the public resentments against those who were inclined either to comply with the law, or to accept the offices through which it was to be executed. These indications of ill temper were succeeded by neighbourhood meetings, in which resolutions of extreme violence were adopted, and by acts of outrage against the persons of revenue officers. At length, in September, 1791, a meeting of delegates from the malcontent counties was held at Pittsburg, in which resolutions were adopted breathing the same spirit with those which had previously been agreed to in county assemblies. Unfortunately, the deputy marshal, who was entrusted with the process against those who had committed acts of violence on the persons of revenue officers, was so intimidated by the turbulent spirit which was generally displayed, that he returned without performing his duty; and thus added to the confidence felt by the disaffected in their strength. Appearances were such as to justify apprehensions, that the judiciary would be found unable to punish the violators of the laws; and the means of obtaining aid from the executive had not been furnished by the legislature. This state of things was the more embarrassing, because the prejudices which had been widely disseminated, and the misconceptions of the act which had been extensively diffused, authorised some fears respecting the support which the law, while yet in the infancy of its operation, would receive from the people. These considerations, added to that repugnance which was felt by the government to the employment of harsh means, induced a forbearance to notice further these riotous proceedings, until the measure, by being carried into full effect in other parts of the union, should be better understood; and until congress should assemble, and modify the system in such a manner as to remove any real objections to it, the existence of which might be suggested by experience. Accordingly, in the legislature which convened in October, 1791, this subject was taken up in pursuance of the recommendation of the President, and an amendatory act was passed in May, 1792, in which the whole system was revised, and great pains were taken to alter such parts of it as could be deemed exceptionable.

This conciliatory measure did not produce the desired effect. No abatement took place in the violence and outrage with which the resistance to the law was conducted. To carry it into execution, officers of inspection were necessary in every county. The malcontents, for a considerable time, deterred every person from consenting to permit an office to be held at his house; and when at length this difficulty was supposed to be overcome, those who had been prevailed on to accede to the propositions of the supervisor in this respect, were compelled, by personal violence, and by threats of the destruction of property, and even of death, to retract the consent they had given.

A meeting was again convened at Pittsburg, in which, among other very exceptionable resolutions, committees were established to correspond with any committees of a similar nature that might be appointed in other parts of the United States. By this meeting it was declared, that they would persist in every legal measure to obstruct the execution of the law, and would consider those who held offices for the collection of the duty as unworthy of their friendship; that they would have no intercourse or dealings with them; would withdraw from them every assistance, and withhold all the comforts of life which depend upon those duties which, as men and fellow citizens, they owed to each other; and would, upon all occasions, treat them with contempt. It was at the same time earnestly recommended to the people at large to adopt the same line of conduct.

No man could be more sensible than the President of the dangerous tendency of these measures, nor more indignant at the outrage thus offered to the government of the United States. But his prudence, and his high respect for the laws restrained him within the narrow limits which the legislature had prescribed. A proclamation[1] was issued exhorting and admonishing all persons to desist from any combinations or proceedings whatsoever, tending to obstruct the execution of the laws, and requiring the interference of the civil magistrate; and prosecutions against the offenders were directed to be instituted in every case in which they could be supported.

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[1] In his letter enclosing the proclamation to the secretary of the treasury, the President observed, "I have no doubt but that the proclamation will undergo many strictures; and, as the effect proposed may not be answered by it, it will be necessary to look forward in time to ulterior arrangements. And here, not only the constitution and laws must strictly govern, but the employment of the regular troops avoided, if it be possible to effect order without their aid; yet if no other means will effectually answer, and the constitution and laws will authorize these, they must be used as the dernier resort."

This proclamation produced no salutary effect. Many of the civil magistrates were themselves concerned in stimulating the excesses they were required to suppress; and those who had not embarked in the criminal enterprise, found themselves totally unable to maintain the sovereignty of the laws.

With a laudable solicitude to avoid extremities, the government still sought for means to recall these misguided people to a sense of duty, without the employment of a military force. To obtain this desirable object, the following system was digested and pursued.

Prosecutions were instituted against delinquents in those cases in which it was believed that they could be maintained. The spirits distilled in the non-complying counties were intercepted on their way to market, and seized by the officers of the revenue; and the agents for the army were directed to purchase only those spirits on which the duty had been paid. By thus acting on the interests of the distillers, the hope was indulged that they might be induced to comply with the law. Could they have obeyed their wishes, these measures would have produced the desired effect; but they were no longer masters of their own conduct. Impelled by a furious multitude, they found it much more dangerous to obey the laws than to resist them. The efficacy of this system too was diminished by a circumstance, which induced the necessity of a second application to the legislature. The act had not been extended to the territory northwest of the Ohio, in which great part of the army lay; and the distillers eluded the vigilance of the government by introducing their spirits into that territory.

While from causes which were incessant and active in their operation, some of which seem too strongly fixed in the human mind ever to be removed, a broad foundation was thus laid for those party struggles whose fury is generally proportioned to the magnitude of the objects to be attained, and to the means which may be employed in attaining them, the external affairs of the United States sustained no change of importance.

Of the good understanding which was preserved with France, a fresh proof had been recently given by the employment of Mr. Ternan, a person peculiarly acceptable to the American government, to succeed the Count de Moustiers, as minister plenipotentiary of his most Christian Majesty; and in turn, Mr. Gouverneur Morris, who was understood to have rendered himself agreeable to the French government, was appointed to represent the United States at the court of Versailles.

In addition to these interchanges of civility, a melancholy occasion had presented itself for giving much more substantial evidence of the alacrity with which the American administration would embrace any proper opportunity of manifesting its disposition to promote the interests of France.

Early and bitter fruits of that malignant philosophy, which, disregarding the actual state of the world, and estimating at nothing the miseries of a vast portion of the human race, can coolly and deliberately pursue, through oceans of blood, abstract systems for the attainment of some fancied untried good, were gathered in the French West Indies. Instead of proceeding in the correction of any abuses which might exist, by those slow and cautious steps which gradually introduce reform without ruin, which may prepare and fit society for that better state of things designed for it, and which, by not attempting impossibilities, may enlarge the circle of happiness, the revolutionists of France formed the mad and wicked project of spreading their doctrines of equality among persons, between whom distinctions and prejudices exist to be subdued only by the grave. The rage excited by the pursuit of this visionary and baneful theory, after many threatening symptoms, burst forth on the 23d day of August 1791, with a fury alike destructive and general. In one night, a preconcerted insurrection of the blacks took place throughout the colony of St. Domingo; and the white inhabitants of the country, while sleeping in their beds, were involved in one indiscriminate massacre, from which neither age nor sex could afford an exemption. Only a few females, reserved for a fate more cruel than death, were intentionally spared; and not many were fortunate enough to escape into the fortified cities. The insurgents then assembled in vast numbers, and a bloody war commenced between them and the whites inhabiting the towns. The whole French part of the island was in imminent danger of being totally lost to the mother country. The minister of his most Christian Majesty applied to the executive of the United States for a sum of money which would enable him to preserve this valuable colony, to be deducted out of the debt to his sovereign; and the request was granted in a manner evincing the interest taken by the administration in whatever might concern France.

On the part of Spain, a desire had been expressed to adjust the subjects in controversy between the two nations by negotiations to be carried on at Madrid; and Mr. Carmichael, and Mr. Short, had been appointed commissioners, with powers equal to the object. In the mean time, the officers of that nation persisted in measures which were calculated to embroil the United States with the southern Indians. By their intrigues with the Creeks, the treaty formed in 1790 with M'Gillivray, was prevented from being ratified, and the boundary line then agreed upon was not permitted to be run. The indefinite claim of territory set up by Spain was alleged to constitute a sufficient objection to any new line of demarcation, until that claim should be settled; and her previous treaties and relations with the Creeks were declared to be infringed by their stipulation, acknowledging themselves to be under the protection of the United States.

An official diplomatic intercourse had at length been opened with Great Britain also. Mr. Hammond, the minister plenipotentiary of that nation to the United States, arrived at Philadelphia in the autumn of 1791; upon which, Mr. Thomas Pinckney, a gentleman of South Carolina, who was highly and justly respected, had been charged with the interests of his country at the court of London.[1] Soon after the arrival of Mr. Hammond, the non-execution of the treaty of peace became the subject of a correspondence between him and the secretary of state, in which the complaints of their respective nations were urged in terms manifesting clearly the sense entertained by each of the justice of those complaints, without furnishing solid ground for the hope that they would be immediately removed on either side.

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[1] In consequence of these nominations of foreign ministers, a motion was made in the senate on a point which is of some importance in settling the principles of the American government. It was contended that the power of that body over the appointment of a foreign minister gave the right to inquire into the policy of making any appointment whatever; and that in exercising this power, they were not to confine themselves to a consideration of the fitness of the person nominated, but were to judge of the propriety of the mission; and were consequently to be informed of the motives which had decided the President to adopt the measure. This opinion was overruled by a small majority.

Mr. Hammond's powers on the subject of a commercial treaty were far from being satisfactory. To the inquiries of Mr. Jefferson on this point, he replied, that he was authorized to enter into a negotiation respecting the commercial intercourse between the two countries, and to discuss those principles which might serve as a basis for a treaty, but not to *conclude* any definitive arrangements. In fact, there was much reason to believe that the obstacles to a commercial treaty between the two countries would not be soon or easily surmounted. In America, such an alteration in the law of nations as would permit the goods of an enemy to pass freely in the bottom of a neutral, was a favourite project; and a full participation of the colonial trade was also most earnestly desired. That the latter of these objects would not be readily conceded by Great Britain did not admit of a doubt; but many intelligent men, possessing great political influence, had embraced the opinion that she could be forced out of that colonial system which every European power having settlements in America had adopted, by regulations restricting her navigation and commerce with the United States. To those who entertained this opinion, no commercial treaty could be acceptable, which did not contain the concessions they required.

In addition to a general knowledge of the sentiments of the British cabinet on these points, particular evidence had lately been received of its positive decision respecting them. A comprehensive report on American affairs had been made to the privy council by a committee of that body, which was laid before the king. A few copies of it had been printed for the members of the cabinet, which were soon called in by a sudden order of council; but one of these copies was obtained, and transmitted to the secretary of state of the United States. This report manifested a willingness to form a commercial treaty with the American government on principles of perfect equality, both with respect to navigation and commerce, so far as regarded the dominions of his Britannic Majesty in Europe; but it also discovered a determination, to adhere inflexibly to the existing regulations for the colonies; and to reject the principle that free bottoms make free goods.

In this state paper the opinion was advanced, that several important articles of exportation from the United States, especially tobacco, had been peculiarly favoured in Great Britain; but that these friendly regulations were not reciprocated by America. The means of retaliating injuries which might be inflicted on British commerce were stated, but those means, it was said, ought not hastily to be adopted, the more especially, as the existing government of the United States had discovered dispositions more favourable to a liberal and fair intercourse between the two countries, than had been manifested by the respective states. For several reasons it was deemed adviseable not suddenly to disturb the existing state of things, but to regulate the trade of the two nations by a treaty, the stipulations of which should be equal, and mutually beneficial, provided such a treaty could be formed without a departure from those principles which were considered as fundamental.

No abatement of hostility having taken place among the northwestern Indians, the preparations for terminating the war by the sword were earnestly pressed. Major General Wayne was appointed to succeed General St. Clair, who resigned the command of the army; and the utmost exertions were made to complete it to the establishment; but the laws furnished such small inducements to engage in the service, that the highest military grades, next to that of Commander-in-chief, were declined by many to whom they were offered; and the recruiting business advanced too slowly to authorize a hope that the decisive expedition which was meditated, could be prudently undertaken in the course of the present year. Meanwhile, the public clamour against the war continued to be loud and violent. It was vehemently asserted, that if the intentions of the government respecting the savages were just and humane, those intentions were unknown to them, and that their resentments were kept up by the aggressions of whites, and by the opinion that their expulsion from the country they occupied was the object of the hostilities carried on against them. However satisfied the President might be of the fallacy of these opinions, they were too extensively maintained not to be respected, as far as was compatible with a due regard to the real interests of the nation. While, therefore, the preparations for offensive operations were hastened by a vigorous exertion of the means at the disposal of the executive, it was thought adviseable to make another effort to terminate the war by a direct communication of the pacific views of the United States.—The failure of these attempts was still less to be lamented than the fate of those who were employed in them. Colonel Harden and Major Trueman, two brave officers and valuable men, were severally despatched with propositions of peace, and each was murdered by the savages.

On the 5th of November congress again convened. In the speech delivered at the commencement of the session, Indian affairs were treated at considerable length, and the continuance of the war was mentioned as a subject of much regret. "The reiterated endeavours," it was said, "which had been made to effect a pacification, had hitherto issued in new and outrageous proofs of persevering hostility on the part of the tribes with whom the United States were in contest."

"A detail of the measures that had been pursued, and of their consequences, which would be laid before congress, while it would confirm the want of success thus far, would evince that means as proper and as efficacious as could have been devised, had been employed. The issue of some of them was still depending; but a favourable one, though not to be despaired of, was not promised by any thing that had yet happened."

That a sanction, commonly respected even among savages, had been found insufficient to protect from massacre the emissaries of peace, was particularly noticed; and the families of those valuable citizens who had thus fallen victims to their zeal for the public service, were recommended to the attention of the legislature.

That unprovoked aggression had been made by the southern Indians, and that there was just cause for apprehension that the war would extend to them also, was mentioned as a subject of additional concern.

"Every practicable exertion had been made to be prepared for the alternative of prosecuting the war, in the event of a failure of pacific overtures. A large proportion of the troops authorized to be raised, had been recruited, though the numbers were yet incomplete; and pains had been taken to discipline them, and put them in a condition for the particular kind of service to be performed. But a delay of operations, besides being dictated by the measures that were pursuing towards a pacific termination of the war, had been in itself deemed preferable to immature efforts."

The humane system which has since been successfully pursued, of gradually civilizing the savages by improving their condition, of diverting them in some degree from hunting to domestic and agricultural occupations by imparting to them some of the most simple and useful acquisitions of society, and of conciliating them to the United States by a beneficial and well regulated commerce, had ever been a favourite object with the President, and the detailed view which was now taken of Indian affairs, was concluded with a repetition of his recommendations of these measures.

The subject next adverted to in the speech, was the impediments which in some places continued to embarrass the collection of the duties on spirits distilled within the United States. After observing that these impediments were lessening in local extent, but that symptoms of such increased opposition had lately manifested themselves in certain places as, in his judgment, to render his special interposition adviseable, the President added,—"Congress may be assured that nothing within constitutional and legal limits which may depend on me, shall be wanting to assert and maintain the just authority of the laws. In fulfilling this trust, I shall count entirely on the full co-operation of the other departments of government, and upon the zealous support of all good citizens."

After noticing various objects which would require the attention of the legislature, the President addressed himself particularly to the house of representatives, and said, "I entertain a strong hope that the state of the national finances is now sufficiently matured to enable you to enter upon a systematic and effectual arrangement for the regular redemption and discharge of the public debt, according to the right which has been reserved to the government. No measure can be more desirable, whether viewed with an eye to its intrinsic importance, or to the general sentiments and wish of the nation."

The addresses of the two houses in answer to the speech, were, as usual, respectful and affectionate. The several subjects recommended to the attention of congress were noticed either in general terms, or in a manner to indicate a coincidence of sentiment between the legislative and executive departments. The turbulent spirit which had manifested itself in certain parts of the union was mentioned by both houses with a just degree of censure, and the measures adopted by the President, as well as the resolution he expressed to compel obedience to the laws, were approved; and the house of representatives, in the most unqualified terms, declared opinions in favour of systematic and effectual arrangements for discharging the public debt. But the subsequent proceedings of the legislature did not fulfil the expectations excited by this auspicious commencement of the session.

At an early day, in a committee of the whole house on the President's speech, Mr. Fitzsimmons moved "that measures for the reduction of so much of the public debt as the United States have a right to redeem, ought to be adopted: and that the secretary of the treasury be directed to report a plan for that purpose."

This motion was objected to by Mr. Madison as being premature. The state of the finances, he thought, was not sufficiently understood to authorize the adoption of the measure it contemplated. The debate however soon took a different direction. That part of the resolution which proposed a reference to the secretary of the treasury was particularly opposed; and an ardent discussion ensued, in which, without much essential variation, the arguments which had before been urged on the same subject were again employed. After a vehement contest, the motion to amend the resolution by striking out the proposed reference was overruled, and it was carried in its original form.

In obedience to this order, the secretary made a report, in which he proposed a plan for the annual redemption of that portion of the debt, the payment of which was warranted by the contract between the United States and their creditors. But the expenses of the Indian war rendering it, in his opinion, unsafe to rest absolutely on the existing revenue, he proposed to extend the internal taxes to pleasure horses, or pleasure carriages, as the legislature might deem most eligible. The consideration of this report was deferred on various pretexts; and a motion was made to reduce the military establishment. The debate on this subject was peculiarly earnest; and, in its progress, the mode of conducting the Indian war, the relative merits and expensiveness of militia and of regular troops, and the danger to liberty from standing armies, were elaborately discussed. It was not until the fourth of January that 1793. the motion was rejected. While that question remained undecided, the report of the secretary was unavoidably postponed, because, on its determination would depend, in the opinion of many, the necessity of additional taxes. It would seem not improbable that the opponents of the American system of finances, who constituted rather a minority of the present congress, but who indulged sanguine hopes of becoming the majority in the next, were desirous of referring every question relating to the treasury department to the succeeding legislature, in which there would be a more full representation of the people. Whatever might be the operating motives for delay, neither the extension of the law imposing a duty on spirits distilled within the United States to the territory northwest of the river Ohio, nor the plan for redeeming the public debt, which was earnestly pressed by the administration, could be carried through the present congress. Those who claimed the favour and confidence of the people as a just reward for their general attachment to liberty, and especially for their watchfulness to prevent every augmentation of debt, were found in opposition to a system for its diminution, which was urged by men who were incessantly charged with entertaining designs for its excessive accumulation, in order to render it the corrupt instrument of executive influence. It might be expected that the public attention would be attracted to such a circumstance.

But when party passions are highly inflamed, reason itself submits to their control, and becomes the instrument of their will. The assertion that the existing revenues, if not prodigally or corruptly wasted, were sufficient for the objects contemplated by the President in his speech, would constitute an ample apology for the impediments thrown in the way of a system which could not be directly disapproved, and would justify a continuance of the charge that the supporters of the fiscal system were friends to the augmentation of the public debt.

Soon after the motion for the reduction of the military establishment was disposed of, another subject was introduced, which effectually postponed, for the present session, every measure connected with the finances of the nation.

An act of congress, which passed on the fourth of August, 1790, authorized the President to cause to be borrowed any sum not exceeding twelve millions of dollars, to be applied in payment of the foreign debt of the United States.

A subsequent act, which passed on the 12th of the same month, authorized another loan not exceeding two millions, to be applied in aid of the sinking fund, towards the extinguishment of the domestic debt.

A power to make these loans was delegated by the President to the secretary of the treasury by a general commission referring to the acts. This commission was accompanied by written instructions, directing the payment of such parts of the foreign debt as should become due at the end of the year 1791; but leaving the secretary, with respect to the residue, to be regulated by the interests of the United States.

Under this commission two loans were negotiated in 1790, and others at subsequent periods.

As many considerations of convenience opposed such an arrangement as would appropriate all the monies arising from either of these loans to one object, to the total exclusion of the other; and no motive was perceived for thus unnecessarily fettering the operations of the treasury; each loan was negotiated under both laws; and consequently the monies produced by each were applicable to both objects, in such proportions as the President might direct. It has been already observed that his written instructions had ordered the payment of those instalments of the foreign debt which should become due before the first of January, 1792; but no further sums on that account were to be borrowed until supplemental orders to that effect should be given, unless a loan could be made on such terms as would render it advantageous to the United States to anticipate the payments to their foreign creditors. It being the opinion of both the President and secretary that the official powers of the latter authorized him to draw the monies borrowed for domestic purposes into the treasury, where they would form a part of the sinking fund, and be applicable to the objects of that fund in conformity with the laws of appropriation, no written instructions were given respecting that part of the subject; but in the progress of the business, every material step which was taken was communicated to the President, and his directions obtained upon it. While the chief magistrate remained at the seat of government, these communications were verbal; when absent, they were made by letter.

At this period, the domestic debt bore a low price in the market, and foreign capital was pouring into the United States for its purchase. The immediate application of the sinking fund to this object would consequently acquire a large portion of the debt, and would also accelerate its appreciation. The best interests of the United States, and his own fame, thus impelling the secretary to give the operations of the sinking fund the utmost activity of which it was susceptible, he had, with the approbation of the President, directed a part of the first loan to be paid in discharge of the instalments of the foreign debt which were actually due, and had drawn a part of it into the public treasury in aid of the sinking fund.

In May, 1791, instructions were given to the agent of the United States in Europe, to apply the proceeds of future loans, as they should accrue, in payments to France, except such sums as should be previously and specially reserved. In the execution of these instructions, some delay intervened, which was to be ascribed, among other causes, to representations made by the French minister of marine that a plan would be adopted, to which a decree of the national assembly was requisite, for converting a large sum into supplies for St. Domingo: and to a desire on the part of the agent to settle, previously to further payments, a definitive rule by which the monies paid should be liquidated, and credited to the United States. The disordered state of French affairs protracted both the one and the other of these causes of delay, to a later period than had been expected; and, in the mean time, the secretary continued to draw into the United States such portions of these loans, as were destined to be brought in aid of the sinking fund. Such was the state of this transaction, when the commencement of those calamities, which have finally overwhelmed St. Domingo, induced the American government, on the urgent application of the French minister, to furnish supplies to that ill fated colony, in payment of the debt to France. This being a mode of payment which, to a certain extent, was desired by the creditor, and was advantageous to the debtor, a consequent disposition prevailed to use it so far as might comport with the wish of the French government; and a part of the money designed for foreign purposes, was drawn into the United States. In the course of these operations, a portion of the instalments actually due to France, had been permitted to remain unsatisfied.

A part of the money borrowed in Europe being thus applicable to the extinguishment of the domestic debt, and a part of the domestic revenue being applicable to the payment of interest due on the loans made in Europe, the secretary of the treasury had appropriated a part of the money arising from foreign loans to the payment of interest due abroad, which had been replaced by the application of money in the treasury arising from domestic resources, to the purchase of the domestic debt.

The secretary had not deemed it necessary to communicate these operations in detail to the legislature: but some hints respecting them having been derived either from certain papers which accompanied a report made to the house of representatives early in the session, or from some other source, Mr. Giles, on the 23d of January, moved several resolutions, requiring information, among other things, on the various points growing out of these loans, and the application of the monies arising from them, and respecting the unapplied revenues of the United States, and the places in which the sums so unapplied were deposited. In the speech introducing these resolutions, observations were made which very intelligibly implied charges of a much more serious nature than inattention to the exact letter of an appropriation law. Estimates were made to support the position that a large balance of public money was unaccounted for.

The resolutions were agreed to without debate; and, in a few days, the secretary transmitted a report containing the information that was required.

This report comprehended a full exposition of the views and motives which had regulated the conduct of the department, and a very able justification of the measures which had been adopted; but omitted to state explicitly that part of the money borrowed in Europe had been drawn into the United States with the sanction of the President.—It is also chargeable with some expressions which can not be pronounced unexceptionable, but which may find their apology in the feelings of a mind conscious of its own uprightness, and wounded by the belief that the proceedings against him had originated in a spirit hostile to fair inquiry.

These resolutions, the observations which accompanied them, and the first number of the report, were the signals for a combined attack on the secretary of the treasury, through the medium of the press. Many anonymous writers appeared, who assailed the head of that department with a degree of bitterness indicative of the spirit in which the inquiry was to be conducted.

On the 27th of February, not many days after the last number of the report was received, Mr. Giles moved sundry resolutions which were founded on the information before the house. The idea of a balance unaccounted for was necessarily relinquished; but the secretary of the treasury was charged with neglect of duty in failing to give congress official information of the monies drawn by him from Europe into the United States; with violating the law of the 4th of August, 1790, by applying a portion of the principal borrowed under it to the payment of interest, and by drawing a part of the same monies into the United States, without instructions from the President; with deviating from the instructions of the President in other respects; with negotiating a loan at the bank, contrary to the public interest, while public monies to a greater amount than were required, lay unemployed in the bank; and with an indecorum to the house, in undertaking to judge of its motives in calling for information which was demandable of him from the constitution of his office; and in failing to give all the necessary information within his knowledge relative to subjects on which certain specified references had been previously made to him.

These resolutions were followed by one, directing that a copy of them should be transmitted to the President of the United States.

The debate on this subject, which commenced on the 28th of February, was continued to the 1st of March, and was conducted with a spirit of acrimony towards the secretary, demonstrating the soreness of the wounds that had been given and received in the political and party wars which had been previously waged.[1] It terminated in a rejection of all the resolutions. The highest number voting in favour of any one of them was sixteen.

On the 3d of March, a constitutional period was put to the existence of the present congress. The members separated with obvious symptoms of extreme irritation. Various causes, the most prominent of which have already been noticed, had combined to organize two distinct parties in the United States, which were rapidly taking the form of a ministerial and an opposition party. By that in opposition, the President was not yet openly renounced. His personal influence was too great to be encountered by a direct avowal that he was at the head of their adversaries; and his public conduct did not admit of a suspicion that he could allow himself to rank as the chief of a party. Nor could public opinion be seduced to implicate him in the ambitious plans and dark schemes for the subversion of liberty, which were ascribed to a part of the administration, and to the leading members who had supported the measures of finance adopted by the legislature.

Yet it was becoming apparent that things were taking a course which must inevitably involve him in the political conflicts which were about to take place. It was apparent that the charges against the secretary of the treasury would not be relinquished, and that they were of a nature to affect the chief magistrate materially, should his countenance not be withdrawn from that officer. It was equally apparent that the fervour of democracy, which was perpetually manifesting itself in the papers, in invectives against levees, against the trappings of royalty, and against the marks of peculiar respect[1] which were paid to the President, must soon include him more pointedly in its strictures.

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[1] See note, No. VIII. at the end of the volume.

These divisions, which are inherent in the nature of popular governments, by which the chief magistrate, however, unexceptionable his conduct, and however exalted his character, must, sooner or later, be more or less affected, were beginning to be essentially influenced by the great events of Europe.

That revolution which has been the admiration, the wonder, and the terror of the civilized world, had, from its commencement, been viewed in America with the deepest interest. In its first stage, but one sentiment respecting it prevailed; and that was a belief, accompanied with an ardent wish, that it would improve the condition of France, extend the blessings of liberty, and promote the happiness of the human race. When the labours of the convention had terminated in a written constitution, this unanimity of opinion was in some degree impaired. By a few who had thought deeply on the science of government, and who, if not more intelligent, certainly judged more dispassionately than their fellow citizens, that instrument was believed to contain the principles of self destruction. It was feared that a system so ill balanced could not be permanent. A deep impression was made on the same persons by the influence of the galleries over the legislature, and of mobs over the executive; by the tumultuous assemblages of the people, and their licentious excesses during the short and sickly existence of the regal authority. These did not appear to be the symptoms of a healthy constitution, or of genuine freedom. Persuaded that the present state of things could not last, they doubted, and they feared for the future.

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[1] On the 22d of February, the birth day of the President, a motion was made to adjourn for half an hour. It was perfectly understood that this motion was made to give the members an opportunity of waiting on the chief magistrate to make the compliments adapted to the occasion.

This was seriously opposed, and the ayes and noes called upon the question. The adjournment was carried by forty-one to eighteen. The day was celebrated by several companies, and some toasts were published manifesting the deep sense which was entertained of the exalted services of this illustrious citizen. These circumstances gave great umbrage to some of those who could perceive monarchical tendencies in every act of respect, and the offenders were rebuked in the National Gazette for setting up an idol who might become dangerous to liberty, and for the injustice of neglecting all his compatriots of the revolution, and ascribing to him the praise which was due to others.

In total opposition to this sentiment was that of the public. There seems to be something infectious in the example of a powerful and enlightened nation verging towards democracy, which imposes on the human mind, and leads human reason in fetters. Novelties, introduced by such a nation, are stripped of the objections which had been preconceived against them; and long settled opinions yield to the overwhelming weight of such dazzling authority. It wears the semblance of being the sense of mankind, breaking loose from the shackles which had been imposed by artifice, and asserting the freedom, and the dignity, of his nature.

The constitution of France, therefore, was generally received with unqualified plaudits. The establishment of a legislature consisting of a single body, was defended not only as being adapted to the particular situation of that country, but as being right in itself. Certain anonymous writers, who supported the theory of a balanced government, were branded as the advocates of royalty, and of aristocracy. To question the duration of the present order of things was thought to evidence an attachment to unlimited monarchy, or a blind prejudice in favour of British institutions; and the partiality of America in favour of a senate was visibly declining.

In this stage of the revolution, however, the division of sentiment was not marked with sufficient distinctness, nor the passions of the people agitated with sufficient violence, for any powerful effect to be produced on the two parties in America. But when the monarchy was completely overthrown, and a republic decreed,[1] the people of the United States seemed electrified by the measure, and its influence was felt by the whole society. The war in which the several potentates of Europe were engaged against France, although in almost every instance declared by that power, was pronounced to be a war for the extirpation of human liberty, and for the banishment of free government from the face of the earth. The preservation of the constitution of the United States was supposed to depend on its issue; and the coalition against France was treated as a coalition against America also.

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[1] This event was announced to the President by the minister plenipotentiary of France at Philadelphia, in February, 1793. Through the secretary of state, an answer was returned, of which the following is an extract, "the President receives with

A cordial wish for the success of the French arms, or rather that the war might terminate without any diminution of French power, and in such a manner as to leave the people of that country free to choose their own form of government, was, perhaps, universal; but, respecting the probable issue of their internal conflicts, perfect unanimity of opinion did not prevail. By some few individuals, the practicability of governing by a system formed on the republican model, an immense, populous, and military nation, whose institutions, habits, and morals, were adapted to monarchy, and which was surrounded by armed neighbours, was deemed a problem which time alone could solve. The circumstances under which the abolition of royalty was declared, the massacres which preceded it, the scenes of turbulence and violence which were acted in every part of the nation, appeared to them, to present an awful and doubtful state of things, respecting which no certain calculations could be made; and the idea that a republic was to be introduced and supported by force, was, to them, a paradox in politics. Under the influence of these appearances, the apprehension was entertained that, if the ancient monarchy should not be restored, a military despotism would be established. By the many, these unpopular doubts were deemed unpardonable here-

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great satisfaction this attention of the executive council, and the desire they have manifested of making known to us the resolution entered into by the national convention even before a definitive regulation of their new establishment could take place. Be assured, sir, that the government and the citizens of the United States, view with the most sincere pleasure, every advance of your nation towards its happiness, an object essentially connected with its liberty, and they consider the union of principles and pursuits between our two countries as a link which binds still closer their interests and affections.

"We earnestly wish, on our part, that these our mutual dispositions may be improved to mutual good, by establishing our commercial intercourse on principles as friendly to natural right and freedom as are those of our governments."

sies; and the few to whom they were imputed, were pronounced hostile to liberty. A suspicion that the unsettled state of things in France had contributed to suspend the payment of the debt to that nation, had added to the asperity with which the resolutions on that subject were supported; and the French revolution will be found to have had great influence on the strength of parties, and on the subsequent political transactions of the United States.

CHAPTER VIII

1793.

The term for which the President and Vice President had been elected being to expire on the third of March, the attention of the public had been directed to the choice of persons who should fill those high offices for the ensuing four years. Respecting the President, but one opinion prevailed. From various motives, all parties concurred in desiring that the present chief magistrate would continue to afford his services to his country. Yielding to the weight of the representations made to him from various quarters, General Washington had been prevailed upon to withhold a declaration, he had at one time purposed to make, of his determination to retire from political life.

Respecting the person who should fill the office of Vice President, the public was divided. The profound statesman who had been called to the duties of that station, had drawn upon himself a great degree of obloquy, by some political tracts, in which he had laboured to maintain the proposition that a balance in government was essential to the preservation of liberty. In these disquisitions, he was supposed by his opponents to have discovered sentiments in favour of distinct orders in society; and, although he had spoken highly of the constitution of the United States, it was imagined that his balance could be maintained only by hereditary classes. He was also understood to be friendly to the system of finance which had been adopted; and was believed to be among the few who questioned the durability of the French republic. His great services, and acknowledged virtues, were therefore disregarded; and a competitor was sought for among those who had distinguished themselves in the opposition. The choice was directed from Mr. Jefferson by a constitutional restriction on the power of the electors, which would necessarily deprive him of the vote to be given by Virginia, it being necessary to designate some other opponent to Mr. Adams, George Clinton, the governor of New York, was selected for this purpose.

Throughout the war of the revolution, this gentleman had filled the office of chief magistrate of his native state; and, under circumstances of real difficulty, had discharged its duties with a courage, and an energy, which secured the esteem of the Commander-in-chief, and gave him a fair claim to the favour of his country. Embracing afterwards with ardour the system of state supremacy, he had contributed greatly to the rejection of the resolutions for investing congress with the power of collecting an impost on imported goods, and had been conspicuous for his determined hostility to the constitution of the United States. His sentiments respecting the measures of the government were known to concur with those of the minority in congress.

Both parties seemed confident in their strength; and both made the utmost exertions to insure success. On opening the ballots in the senate chamber, it appeared that the unanimous suffrage of his country had been once more conferred on General Washington, and that Mr. Adams had received a plurality of the votes.

The unceasing endeavours of the executive to terminate the Indian war by a treaty, had at length succeeded with the savages of the Wabash; and, through the intervention of the Six Nations, those of the Miamis had also been induced to consent to a conference to be held in the course of the ensuing spring. Though probability was against the success of this attempt to restore peace, all offensive operations, on the part of the United States, were still farther suspended. The Indians did not entirely abstain from hostilities; and the discontents of the western people were in no small degree increased by this temporary prohibition of all incursions into the country of their enemy. In Georgia, where a desire to commence hostilities against the southern Indians had been unequivocally manifested, this restraint increased the irritation against the administration.

The Indian war was becoming an object of secondary magnitude. The critical and irritable state of things in France began so materially to affect the United States, as to require an exertion of all the prudence, and all the firmness, of the government. The 10th[1] of August 1792, was succeeded in that nation by such a state of anarchy, and by scenes of so much blood and horror; the nation was understood to be so divided with respect to its future course; and the republican party was threatened by such a formidable external force; that there was much reason to doubt whether the fallen monarch would be finally deposed, or re-instated with a greater degree of splendour and power than the constitution just laid in ruins, had assigned to him. That, in the latter event, any partialities which might be manifested towards the intermediate possessors of authority, would be recollected with indignation, could not be questioned by an attentive observer of the vindictive spirit of parties;—a spirit which the deeply tragic scenes lately exhibited, could not fail to work up to its highest possible pitch. The American minister at Paris, finding himself in a situation not expected by his government, sought to pursue a circumspect line of conduct, which should in no respect compromise the United States. The executive council of France, disappointed at the coldness which that system required, communicated their dissatisfaction to their minister at Philadelphia. At the same time, Mr. Morris made full representations of every transaction to his government, and requested explicit instructions for the regulation of his future conduct.

The administration entertained no doubt of the propriety of recognising the existing authority of France, whatever form it might assume. That every nation possessed a right to govern itself according to its own will, to change its institutions at discretion, and to transact its business through whatever agents it might think proper, were stated to Mr. Morris to be principles on which the American government itself was founded, and the application of which could be denied to no other people. The payment of the debt, so far as it was to be made in Europe, might be suspended only until the national convention should authorize some power to sign acquittances for the monies received; and the sums required for St. Domingo would be immediately furnished. These payments would exceed the instalments which had fallen due; and the utmost punctuality would be observed in future. These instructions were accompanied with assurances that the government would omit no opportunity of convincing the French people of its cordial wish to serve them; and with a declaration that all circumstances seemed to destine the two nations for the most intimate connexion with each other. It was also pressed upon Mr. Morris to seize every occasion of conciliating the affections of France to the United States, and of placing the commerce between the two countries on the best possible footing.[1]

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[1] The day on which the palace of the Thuilleries was stormed and the royal government subverted.

The feelings of the President were in perfect unison with the sentiments expressed in this letter. His attachment to the French nation was as strong, as consisted with a due regard to the interest of his own; and his wishes for its happiness were as ardent, as was compatible with the duties of a chief magistrate to the state over which he presided. Devoted to the principles of real liberty, and approving unequivocally the republican form of government, he hoped for a favourable result from the efforts which were making to establish that form, by the great ally of the United States; but was not so transported by those efforts, as to involve his country in their issue; or totally to forget that those aids which constituted the basis of these partial feelings, were furnished by the family whose fall was the source of triumph to a large portion of his fellow citizens.

He therefore still preserved the fixed purpose of maintaining the neutrality of the United States, however general the war might be in Europe; and his zeal for the revolution did not assume so ferocious a character as to silence the dictates of humanity, or of friendship.

Not much time elapsed before the firmness of this resolution was put to the test.

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[1] With this letter were addressed two others to the ministers at London and Paris respectively, stating the interest taken by the President and people of the United States in the fate of the Marquis de Lafayette. This gentleman was declared a traitor by France, and was imprisoned by Prussia. The ministers of the United States were to avail themselves of every opportunity of sounding the way towards his liberation, which they were to endeavour to obtain by informal solicitations; but, if formal ones should be necessary, they were to watch the moment when they might be urged with the best prospect of success. This letter was written at the sole instance of the President.

Early in April, the declaration of war made by France against Great Britain and Holland reached the United States. This event restored full vivacity to a flame, which a peace of ten years had not been able to extinguish. A great majority of the American people deemed it criminal to remain unconcerned spectators of a conflict between their ancient enemy and republican France. The feeling upon this occasion was almost universal. Men of all parties partook of it. Disregarding totally the circumstances which led to the rupture, except the order which had been given to the French minister to leave London, and disregarding equally the fact that actual hostilities were first commenced by France, the war was confidently and generally pronounced a war of aggression on the part of Great Britain, undertaken with the sole purpose of imposing a monarchical government on the French people. The few who did not embrace these opinions, and they were certainly very few, were held up as objects of public detestation; and were calumniated as the tools of Britain, and the satellites of despotism.

Yet the disposition to engage in the war, was far from being general. The inclination of the public led to a full indulgence of the most extravagant partiality; but not many were willing to encounter the consequences which that indulgence would infallibly produce. The situation of America was precisely that, in which the wisdom and foresight of a prudent and enlightened government, was indispensably necessary to prevent the nation from inconsiderately precipitating itself into calamities, which its reflecting judgment would avoid.

As soon as intelligence of the rupture between France and Britain was received in the United States, indications were given in some of the seaports, of a disposition to engage in the unlawful business of privateering on the commerce of the belligerent powers. The President was firmly determined to suppress these practices, and immediately requested the attention of the heads of departments to this interesting subject.

As the new and difficult situation in which the United States were placed suggested many delicate inquiries, he addressed a circular letter to the cabinet ministers, inclosing for their consideration a well digested series of questions, the answers to which would form a complete system by which to regulate the conduct of the executive in the arduous situations which were approaching.[1]

These queries, with some of the answers of them, though submitted only to the cabinet, found their way to the leading members of the opposition; and were among the unacknowledged but operating pieces of testimony, on which the charge against the administration, of cherishing dispositions unfriendly to the French republic, was founded. In taking a view of the whole ground, points certainly occurred, and were submitted to the consideration of the cabinet, on which neither the chief magistrate nor his ministers felt any doubt. But the introduction of questions relative to these points, among others with which they were intimately connected, would present a more full view of the subject, and was incapable of producing any mischievous effect, while they were confined to those for whom alone they were intended.

In the meeting of the heads of departments and the attorney general, which was held in consequence of this letter, it was unanimously agreed, that a proclamation ought to issue, forbidding the citizens of the United States to take part in any hostilities on the seas, with, or against, any of the belligerent powers; warning them against carrying to any of those powers articles deemed contraband according to the modern usages of nations; and enjoining them from all acts inconsistent with the duties of a friendly nation towards those at war.

With the same unanimity, the President was advised to receive a minister from the republic of France; but, on the question respecting a qualification to his reception, a division was perceived. The secretary of state and the attorney general were of opinion, that no cause existed for departing in the present instance from the usual mode of acting on such occasions. The revolution in France, they conceived, had produced no change in the relations between the two nations; nor was there any thing in the alteration of government, or in the character of the war, which could impair the right of France to demand, or weaken the duty of the United States faithfully to comply with the engagements which had been solemnly formed.

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[1] See note No. IX. at the end of the volume.

The secretaries of the treasury, and of war, held a different opinion. Admitting in its fullest latitude the right of a nation to change its political institutions according to its own will, they denied its right to involve other nations, *absolutely and unconditionally,* in the consequences of the changes which it may think proper to make. They maintained the right of a nation to absolve itself from the obligations even of real treaties, when such a change of circumstances takes place in the internal situation of the other contracting party, as so essentially to alter the existing state of things, that it may with good faith be pronounced to render a continuance of the connexion which results from them, disadvantageous or dangerous.

They reviewed the most prominent of those transactions which had recently taken place in France, and noticed the turbulence, the fury, and the injustice with which they were marked. The jacobin club at Paris, whose influence was well understood, had even gone so far, previous to the meeting of the convention, as to enter into measures with the avowed object of purging that body of those persons, favourers of royalty, who might have escaped the attention of the primary assemblies. This review was taken, to show that the course of the revolution had been attended with circumstances which militate against a full conviction of its having been brought to its present stage, by such a free, regular, and deliberate act of the nation, as ought to silence all scruples about the validity of what had been done. They appeared to doubt whether the present possessors of power ought to be considered as having acquired it with the real consent of France, or as having seized it by violence;—whether the existing system could be considered as permanent, or merely temporary.

They were therefore of opinion, not that the treaties should be annulled or absolutely suspended, but that the United States should reserve, for future consideration and discussion, the question whether the operation of those treaties ought not to be deemed temporarily and provisionally suspended. Should this be the decision of the government, they thought it due to a spirit of friendly and candid procedure, in the most conciliating terms, to apprize the expected minister of this determination.

On the questions relative to the application of the clause of guarantee to the existing war, some diversity of sentiment also prevailed. The secretary of state and the attorney general conceived, that no necessity for deciding thereon existed, while the secretaries of the treasury, and of war, were of opinion that the treaty of alliance was plainly defensive, and that the clause of guarantee did not apply to a war which, having been commenced by France, must be considered as offensive on the part of that power.

Against convening congress, the opinion appears to have been unanimous.

The cabinet being thus divided on an important part of the system which, in the present critical posture of affairs, ought to be adopted by the executive, the President signified his desire that the ministers would respectively state to him in writing the opinions they had formed, together with the reasoning and authorities by which those opinions were supported.

The written arguments which were presented on this occasion, while they attest the labour, and reflect honour on the talents of those by whom they were formed, and evince the equal sincerity and zeal with which the opinions on each side were advanced, demonstrate an opposition of sentiment respecting the French revolution, which threatened to shed its influence on all measures connected with that event, and to increase the discord which already existed in the cabinet.

So far as respected the reception of a minister from the French republic without qualifying that act by any explanations, and the continuing obligation of the treaties, the President appears to have decided in favour of the opinions given by the secretary of state and the attorney general.

The proclamation of neutrality which was prepared by the attorney general, in conformity with the principles which had been adopted, was laid before the cabinet; and, being approved, was signed by the President, and ordered to be published.

This measure derives importance from the consideration, that it was the commencement of that system to which the American government afterwards inflexibly adhered, and to which much of the national prosperity is to be ascribed. It is not less important in another view. Being at variance with the prejudices, the feelings, and the passions of a large portion of the society, and being founded on no previous proceedings of the legislature, it presented the first occasion, which was thought a fit one, for openly assaulting a character, around which the affections of the people had thrown an armour theretofore deemed sacred, and for directly criminating the conduct of the President himself. It was only by opposing passions to passions, by bringing the feeling in favour of France, into conflict with those in favour of the chief magistrate, that the enemies of his administration could hope to obtain the victory.

For a short time, the opponents of this measure treated it with some degree of delicacy. The opposition prints occasionally glanced at the executive; considered all governments, including that of the United States, as naturally hostile to the liberty of the people; and ascribed to this disposition, the combination of European governments against France, and the apathy with which this combination was contemplated by the executive. At the same time, the most vehement declamations were published, for the purpose of inflaming the resentments of the people against Britain; of enhancing the obligations of America to France; of confirming the opinions, that the coalition of European monarchs was directed, not less against the United States, than against that power to which its hostility was avowed, and that those who did not avow this sentiment were the friends of that coalition, and equally the enemies of America and France.

These publications, in the first instance, sufficiently bitter, quickly assumed a highly increased degree of acrimony.

As soon as the commotions which succeeded the deposition of Louis XVI. had, in some degree, subsided, the attention of the French government was directed to the United States, and the resolution was taken to recall the minister who had been appointed by the king; and to replace him with one who might be expected to enter, with more enthusiasm, into the views of the republic.[1]

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[1] See note, No. X. at the end of the volume.

The citizen Genet, a gentleman of considerable talents, and of an ardent temper, was selected for this purpose.

The letters he brought to the executive of the United States, and his instructions, which he occasionally communicated, were, in a high degree, flattering to the nation, and decently respectful to its government. But Mr. Genet was also furnished with private instructions, which the course of subsequent events tempted him to publish. These indicate that, if the American executive should not be found sufficiently compliant with the views of France, the resolution had been taken to employ with the people of the United States the same policy which was so successfully used with those of Europe; and thus to effect an object which legitimate negotiations might fail to accomplish.

Mr. Genet possessed many qualities which were peculiarly adapted to the objects of his mission; but he seems to have been betrayed by the flattering reception which was given him, and by the universal fervour expressed for his republic, into a too speedy disclosure of his intentions.

On the eighth of April he arrived, not at Philadelphia, but at Charleston, in South Carolina, a port whose contiguity to the West Indies would give it peculiar convenience as a resort for privateers. He was received by the governor of that state, and by its citizens, with an enthusiasm well calculated to dissipate every doubt he might previously have entertained, concerning the dispositions on which he was to operate. At this place he continued for several days, receiving extravagant marks of public attachment, during which time, he undertook to authorize the fitting and arming of vessels in that port, enlisting men, and giving commissions to cruise and commit hostilities on nations with whom the United States were at peace. The captures made by these cruisers were brought into port, and the consuls of France were assuming, under the authority of Mr. Genet, to hold courts of admiralty on them, to try, condemn, and authorize their sale.

From Charleston, Mr. Genet proceeded by land to Philadelphia, receiving on his journey, at the different towns through which he passed, such marks of enthusiastic attachment as had never before been lavished on a foreign minister. On the 16th of May, he arrived at the seat of government, preceded by the intelligence of his transactions in South Carolina. This information did not diminish the extravagant transports of joy with which he was welcomed by the great body of the inhabitants. Means had been taken to render his entry pompous and triumphal; and the opposition papers exultingly stated that he was met at Gray's ferry by "crowds who flocked from every avenue of the city, to meet the republican ambassador of an allied nation."

The day succeeding his arrival, he received addresses of congratulation from particular societies, and from the citizens of Philadelphia, who waited on him in a body, in which they expressed their fervent gratitude for the "zealous and disinterested aids," which the French people had furnished to America, unbounded exultation at the success with which their arms had been crowned, and a positive conviction that the safety of the United States depended on the establishment of the republic. The answers to these addresses were well calculated to preserve the idea of a complete fraternity between the two nations; and that their interests were identified.

The day after being thus accredited by the citizens of Philadelphia, he was presented to the President, by whom he was received with frankness, and with expressions of a sincere and cordial regard for his nation. In the conversation which took place on this occasion, Mr. Genet gave the most explicit assurances that, in consequence of the distance of the United States from the theatre of action, and of other circumstances, France did not wish to engage them in the war, but would willingly leave them to pursue their happiness and prosperity in peace. The more ready faith was given to these declarations, because it was believed that France might derive advantages from the neutrality of America, which would be a full equivalent for any services which she could render as a belligerent.

Before the ambassador of the republic had reached the seat of government, a long catalogue of complaints, partly founded on his proceedings in Charleston, had been made by the British minister to the American executive.

This catalogue was composed of the assumptions of sovereignty already mentioned;—assumptions calculated to render America an instrument of hostility to be wielded by France against those powers with which she might be at war.

These were still further aggravated by the commission of actual hostilities within the territories of the United States. The ship Grange, a British vessel which had been cleared out from Philadelphia, was captured by the French frigate L'Ambuscade within the capes of the Delaware, while on her way to the ocean.

The prizes thus unwarrantably made, being brought within the power of the American government, Mr. Hammond, among other things, demanded a restitution of them.

On many of the points suggested by the conduct of Mr. Genet, and by the memorials of the British minister, it would seem impossible that any difference of opinion could exist among intelligent men, not under the dominion of a blind infatuation. Accordingly it was agreed in the cabinet, without a dissenting voice, that the jurisdiction of every independent nation, within the limits of its own territory, being of a nature to exclude the exercise of any authority therein by a foreign power, the proceedings complained of, not being warranted by any treaty, were usurpations of national sovereignty, and violations of neutral rights, a repetition of which it was the duty of the government to prevent.

It was also agreed that the efficacy of the laws should be tried against those citizens of the United States who had joined in perpetrating the offence.

The question of restitution, except as to the Grange, was more dubious. The secretary of state and the attorney general contended that, if the commissions granted by Mr. Genet were invalid, the captures were totally void, and the courts would adjudge the property to remain in the former owners. In this point of view, therefore, there being a regular remedy at law, it would be irregular for the government to interpose.

If, on the contrary, the commissions were good, then, the captures having been made on the high seas, under a valid commission from a power at war with Great Britain, the original right of the British owner was, by the laws of war, transferred to the captor.

The legal right being in the captor, it could only be taken from him by an act of force, that is to say, of reprisal for the offence committed against the United States in the port of Charleston. Reprisal is a very serious thing, ought always to be preceded by a demand and refusal of satisfaction, is generally considered as an act of war, and never yet failed to produce it in the case of a nation able to make war.

Admitting the case to be of sufficient importance to require reprisal, and to be ripe for that step, the power of taking it was vested by the constitution in congress, not in the executive department of the government.

Of the reparation for the offence committed against the United States, they were themselves the judges, and could not be required by a foreign nation, to demand more than was satisfactory to themselves. By disavowing the act, by taking measures to prevent its repetition, by prosecuting the American citizens who were engaged in it, the United States ought to stand justified with Great Britain; and a demand of further reparation by that power would be a wrong on her part.

The circumstances under which these equipments had been made, in the first moments of the war, before the government could have time to take precautions against them, and its immediate disapprobation of those equipments, must rescue it from every imputation of being accessary to them, and had placed it with the offended, not the offending party.

Those gentlemen were therefore of opinion, that the vessels which had been captured on the high seas, and brought into the United States, by privateers fitted out and commissioned in their ports, ought not to be restored.

The secretaries of the treasury, and of war, were of a different opinion. They urged that a neutral, permitting itself to be made an instrument of hostility by one belligerent against another, became thereby an associate in the war. If land or naval armaments might be formed by France within the United States, for the purpose of carrying on expeditions against her enemy, and might return with the spoils they had taken, and prepare new enterprises, it was apparent that a state of war would exist between America and those enemies, of the worst kind for them: since, while the resources of the country were employed in annoying them, the instruments of this annoyance would be occasionally protected from pursuit, by the privileges of an ostensible neutrality. It was easy to see that such a state of things could not be tolerated longer than until it should be perceived.

It being confessedly contrary to the duty of the United States, as a neutral nation, to suffer privateers to be fitted in their ports to annoy the British trade, it seemed to follow that it would comport with their duty, to remedy the injury which may have been sustained, when it is in their power so to do.

That the fact had been committed before the government could provide against it might be an excuse, but not a justification. Every government is responsible for the conduct of all parts of the community over which it presides, and is supposed to possess, at all times, the means of preventing infractions of its duty to foreign nations. In the present instance, the magistracy of the place ought to have prevented them. However valid this excuse might have been, had the privateers expedited from Charleston been sent to the French dominions, there to operate out of the reach of the United States, it could be of no avail when their prizes were brought into the American ports, and the government, thereby, completely enabled to administer a specific remedy for the injury.

Although the commissions, and the captures made under them, were valid as between the parties at war, they were not so as to the United States. For the violation of their rights, they had a claim to reparation, and might reasonably demand, as the reparation to which they were entitled, restitution of the property taken, with or without an apology for the infringement of their sovereignty. This they had a right to demand as a species of reparation consonant with the nature of the injury, and enabling them to do justice to the party in injuring whom they had been made instrumental. It could be no just cause of complaint on the part of the captors that they were required to surrender a property, the means of acquiring which took their origin in a violation of the rights of the United States.

On the other hand, there was a claim on the American government to arrest the effects of the injury or annoyance to which it had been made accessary. To insist therefore on the restitution of the property taken, would be to enforce a right, in order to the performance of a duty.

These commissions, though void as to the United States, being valid as between the parties, the case was not proper for the decision of the courts of justice. The whole was an affair between the governments of the parties concerned, to be settled by reasons of state, not rules of law. It was the case of an infringement of national sovereignty to the prejudice of a third party, in which the government was to demand a reparation, with the double view of vindicating its own rights, and of doing justice to the suffering party.

They, therefore, were of opinion that, in the case stated for their consideration, restitution ought to be made.

On the point respecting which his cabinet was divided, the President took time to deliberate. Those principles on which a concurrence of sentiment had been manifested being considered as settled, the secretary of state was desired to communicate them to the ministers of France and Britain; and circular letters were addressed to the executives of the several states, requiring their co-operation, with force if necessary, in the execution of the rules which were established.

The citizen Genet was much dissatisfied with these decisions of the American government. He thought them contrary to natural right, and subversive of the treaties by which the two nations were connected. In his exposition of these treaties, he claimed, for his own country, all that the two nations were restricted from conceding to others, thereby converting negative limitations into an affirmative grant of privileges to France.

Without noticing a want of decorum in some of the expressions which Mr. Genet had employed, he was informed that the subjects on which his letter treated had, from respect to him, been reconsidered by the executive; but that no cause was perceived for changing the system which had been adopted. He was further informed that, in the opinion of the President, the United States owed it to themselves, and to the nations in their friendship, to expect, as a reparation for the offence of infringing their sovereignty, that the vessels, thus illegally equipped, would depart from their ports.

Mr. Genet was not disposed to acquiesce in these decisions.

Adhering to his own construction of the existing treaty, he affected to consider the measures of the American government as infractions of it, which no power in the nation had a right to make, unless the United States in congress assembled should determine that their solemn engagements should no longer be performed. Intoxicated with the sentiments expressed by a great portion of the people, and unacquainted with the firm character of the executive, he seems to have expected that the popularity of his nation would enable him to overthrow that department, or to render it subservient to his views. It is difficult otherwise to account for his persisting to disregard its decisions, and for passages with which his letters abound, such as the following.

"Every obstruction by the government of the United States to the arming of French vessels must be an attempt on the rights of man, upon which repose the independence and laws of the United States; a violation of the ties which unite the people of France and America; and even a manifest contradiction of the system of neutrality of the President; for, in fact, if our merchant vessels,[1] or others, are not allowed to arm themselves, when the French alone are resisting the league of all the tyrants against the liberty of the people, they will be exposed to inevitable ruin in going out of the ports of the United States, which is certainly not the intention of the people of America. Their fraternal voice has resounded from every quarter around me, and their accents are not equivocal. They are pure as the hearts of those by whom they are expressed, and the more they have touched my sensibility, the more they must interest in the happiness of America the nation I represent;—the more I wish, sir, that the federal government should observe, as far as in their power, the public engagements contracted by both nations; and that, by this generous and prudent conduct, they will give at least to the world, the example of a true neutrality, which does not consist in the cowardly abandonment of their friends in the moment when danger menaces them, but in adhering strictly, if they can do no better, to the obligations they have contracted with them. It is by such proceedings that they will render themselves respectable to all the powers; that they will preserve their friends and deserve to augment their numbers."

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[1] The regulation alluded to as was stated by Mr. Jefferson in reply, did not relate to vessels arming for defence, but to cruisers against the enemies of France.

A few days previous to the reception of the letter from which the above is an extract, two citizens of the United States, who had been engaged by Mr. Genet in Charleston to cruise in the service of France, were arrested by the civil magistrate, in pursuance of the determination formed by the executive for the prosecution of persons having thus offended against the laws. Mr. Genet demanded their release in the following extraordinary terms.

"I have this moment been informed that two officers in the service of the republic of France, citizen Gideon Henfield and John Singletary, have been arrested on board the privateer of the French republic, the Citizen Genet, and conducted to prison. The crime laid to their charge—the crime which my mind can not conceive, and which my pen almost refuses to state,—is the serving of France, and defending with her children the common glorious cause of liberty.

"Being ignorant of any positive law or treaty which deprives Americans of this privilege, and authorizes officers of police arbitrarily to take mariners in the service of France from on board their vessels, I call upon your intervention, sir, and that of the President of the United States, in order to obtain the immediate releasement of the above mentioned officers, who have acquired, by the sentiments animating them, and by the act of their engagement, anterior to every act to the contrary, the right of French citizens, if they have lost that of American citizens."

This lofty offensive style could not fail to make a deep impression on a mind penetrated with a just sense of those obligations by which the chief magistrate is bound to guard the dignity of his government, and to take care that his nation be not degraded in his person. Yet, in no single instance, did the administration, in its communications with Mr. Genet, permit itself to be betrayed into the use of one intemperate expression. The firmness with which the extravagant pretensions of that gentleman were resisted, proceeding entirely from a sense of duty and conviction of right, was unaccompanied with any marks of that resentment which his language and his conduct were alike calculated to inspire.

Mr. Genet appears to have been prevented from acquiescing in a line of conduct thus deliberately adopted and prudently pursued, by a belief that the sentiments of the people were in direct opposition to the measures of their government. So excessive, and so general, were the demonstrations of enthusiastic devotion to France; so open were their expressions of outrage and hostility towards all the powers at war with that republic; so thin was the veil which covered the chief magistrate from that stream of malignant opprobrium directed against every measure which thwarted the views of Mr. Genet; that a person less sanguine than that minister might have cherished the hope of being able ultimately to triumph over the opposition to his designs. Civic festivals, and other public assemblages of people, at which the ensigns of France were displayed in union with those of America; at which the red cap, as a symbol of French liberty and fraternity, triumphantly passed from head to head; at which toasts were given expressive of a desire to identify the people of America with those of France; and, under the imposing guise of adhering to principles not to men, containing allusions to the influence of the President which could not be mistaken; appeared to Mr. Genet to indicate a temper extremely favourable to his hopes, and very different from that which would be required for the preservation of an honest neutrality. Through the medium of the press, these sentiments were communicated to the public, and were represented as flowing from the hearts of the great body of the people. In various other modes, that important engine contributed its powerful aid to the extension of opinions, calculated, essentially, to vary the situation of the United States. The proclamation of neutrality which was treated as a royal edict, was not only considered as assuming powers not belonging to the executive, and, as evidencing the monarchical tendencies of that department, but as demonstrating the disposition of the government to break its connexions with France, and to dissolve the friendship which united the people of the two republics. The declaration that "the duty and interest of the United States required that they should with sincerity and good faith adopt and pursue a conduct friendly and impartial towards the belligerent powers," gave peculiar umbrage. The scenes of the revolutionary war were brought into review; the object and effect of British hostility were painted in glowing colours; and the important aids afforded by France were drawn with a pencil not less animated. That the conduct of Britain, since the treaty of peace had furnished unequivocal testimony of enmity to the United States, was strongly pressed. With this continuing enmity was contrasted the amicable dispositions professed by the French republic; and it was asked with indignation, whether the interests of the United States required that they should pursue "a line of conduct entirely impartial between these two powers? That the services of the one as well as the injuries of the other, should be forgotten? that a friend and an enemy should be treated with equal favour? and that neither gratitude nor resentment should constitute a feature of the American character?" The supposed freedom of the French was opposed to the imagined slavery of the English; and it was demanded whether "the people of America were alike friendly to republicanism and to monarchy? to liberty and to despotism?"

With infectious enthusiasm it was contended, that there was a natural and inveterate hostility between monarchies and republics; that the present combination against France was a combination against liberty in every part of the world; and that the destinies of America were inseparably linked with those of the French republic.

On the various points of controversy which had arisen between the executive and Mr. Genet, this active and powerful party openly and decidedly embraced the principles for which that minister contended. It was assumed that his demands were sanctioned by subsisting treaties, and that his exposition of those instruments was perfectly correct. The conduct of the executive in withholding privileges to which France was said to be entitled by the most solemn engagements, was reprobated with extreme acrimony; was considered as indicative of a desire to join the coalesced despots in their crusade against liberty; and as furnishing to the French republic such just motives for war, that it required all her moderation and forbearance to restrain her from declaring it against the United States.

Mr. Genet was exhorted not to relax in his endeavours to maintain the just rights of his country; and was assured that, in the affections of the people, he would find a firm and certain support.

These principles and opinions derived considerable aid from the labours and intrigues of certain societies, who had constituted themselves the guardians of American liberty.

The manner in which that attention to the conduct of those invested with power which is essential in balanced governments, may safely be employed, had been so misconceived, that temporary and detached clubs of citizens had occasionally been formed in different parts of the United States, for the avowed purpose of watching the conduct of their rulers. After the adoption of the constitution, some slight use was made, by its enemies, of this weapon; and, in the German Republican Society particularly, many of the most strenuous opponents of the administration were collected.

The force and power of these institutions had been fully developed, and their efficacy in prostrating existing establishments clearly ascertained by the revolution in France. The increased influence which they derived from corresponding with each other, had been unequivocally demonstrated; and soon after the arrival of Mr. Genet, a democratic society was formed in Philadelphia on the model of the Jacobin club in Paris. An anxious solicitude for the preservation of freedom, the very existence of which was menaced by a "European confederacy transcendent in power and unparalleled in iniquity;" which was endangered also by "the pride of wealth and arrogance of power," displayed within the United States; was the motive assigned for the association. "A constant circulation of useful information, and a liberal communication of republican sentiments, were thought to be the best antidotes to any political poison with which the vital principle of civil liberty might be attacked:" and to give the more extensive operation to their labours, a corresponding committee was appointed, through whom they would communicate with other societies, which might be established on similar principles, and purposes throughout the United States.

Faithful to their founder, and true to the real objects of their association, these societies continued, during the term of their existence, to be the resolute champions of all the encroachments attempted by the agents of the French republic on the government of the United States, and the steady defamers of the views and measures of the American executive.

Thus strongly supported, Mr. Genet persisted in his construction of the treaties between the two nations; and, in defiance of the positive determination of the government, continued to act according to that construction.

The President was called to Mount Vernon by urgent business, which detained him less than three weeks; and, in his absence, the heads of departments superintended the execution of those rules which had been previously established.

In this short interval, a circumstance occurred, strongly marking the rashness of the minister of France, and his disrespect to the executive of the United States.

The Little Sarah, an English merchantman, had been captured by a French frigate, and brought into the port of Philadelphia, where she was completely equipped as a privateer, and was just about to sail on a cruise under the name of *le petit Democrat,* when the secretary of the treasury communicated her situation to the secretaries of state and of war; in consequence of which, Governor Mifflin was desired to cause an examination of the fact. The warden of the port was directed to institute the proper inquiries; and, late in the evening of the sixth of July, he reported her situation, and that she was to sail the next day.

In pursuance of the instructions which had been given by the President, the governor immediately sent Mr. Secretary Dallas for the purpose of prevailing on Mr. Genet to relieve him from the employment of force, by detaining the vessel in port until the arrival of the President, who was then on his way from Mount Vernon. Mr. Dallas communicated this message to the French minister in terms as conciliatory as its nature would permit. On receiving it, he gave a loose to the most extravagant passion. After exclaiming with vehemence against the measure, he complained, in strong terms, and with many angry epithets, of the ill treatment which he had received from some of the officers of the general government, which he contrasted with the cordial attachment that was expressed by the people at large for his nation. He ascribed the conduct of those officers to principles inimical to the cause of France, and of liberty. He insinuated that, by their influence, the President had been misled; and observed with considerable emphasis, that the President was not the sovereign of this country. The powers of peace and war being vested in congress, it belonged to that body to decide those questions growing out of treaties which might involve peace or war; and the President, therefore, ought to have assembled the national legislature before he ventured to issue his proclamation of neutrality, or to prohibit, by his instructions to the state governors, the enjoyment of the particular rights which France claimed under the express stipulations of the treaty of commerce. The executive construction of that treaty was neither just nor obligatory; and he would make no engagement which might be construed into a relinquishment of rights which his constituents deemed indispensable. In the course of this vehement and angry declamation, he spoke of publishing his correspondence with the officers of government, together with a narrative of his proceedings; and said that, although the existing causes would warrant an abrupt departure, his regard for the people of America would induce him to remain here, amidst the insults and disgusts that he daily suffered in his official character from the public officers, until the meeting of congress; and if that body should agree in the opinions and support the measures of the President, he would certainly withdraw, and leave the dispute to be adjusted between the two nations themselves. His attention being again called by Mr. Dallas to the particular subject, he peremptorily refused to enter into any arrangements for suspending the departure of the privateer, and cautioned him against any attempt to seize her, as she belonged to the republic; and, in defence of the honour of her flag, would unquestionably repel force by force.

On receiving the report of Mr. Dallas, Governor Mifflin ordered out one hundred and twenty militia, for the purpose of taking possession of the privateer; and communicated the case, with all its circumstances, to the officers of the executive government. On the succeeding day, Mr. Jefferson waited on Mr.

Genet, in the hope of prevailing on him to pledge his word that the privateer should not leave the port until the arrival of the President. The minister was not less intemperate with Mr. Jefferson than he had been with Mr. Dallas. He indulged himself, in a repetition of nearly the same passionate language, and again spoke, with extreme harshness, of the conduct of the executive. He persisted in refusing to make any engagements for the detention of the vessel; and, after his rage had in some degree spent itself, he entreated that no attempt might be made to take possession of her, as her crew was on board and force would be repelled by force.

He then also said that she was not ready to sail immediately. She would change her position, and fall down the river a small distance on that day; but was not yet ready to sail.

In communicating this conversation to Governor Mifflin, Mr. Jefferson stated his conviction that the privateer would remain in the river until the President should decide on her case; in consequence of which, the governor dismissed the militia, and requested the advice of the heads of departments on the course which it would be proper for him to pursue. Both the governor and Mr. Jefferson stated, that in reporting the conversation between Mr. Genet and himself, Mr. Dallas had said that Mr. Genet threatened, in express terms, "to appeal from the President to the people."

Thus braved and insulted in the very heart of the American empire, the secretaries of the treasury, and of war, were of opinion that it was expedient to take immediate provisional measures for establishing a battery on Mud Island, under cover of a party of militia, with directions, that if the vessel should attempt to depart before the pleasure of the President should be known concerning her, military coercion should be employed to arrest her progress.

The secretary of state dissenting from this opinion, the measure was not adopted. The vessel fell down to Chester before the arrival of the President, and sailed on her cruise before the power of the government could be interposed.

On the 11th of July the President reached Philadelphia, and requested that his cabinet ministers would convene at his house the next day at nine in the morning.

Among the papers placed in his hands by the secretary of state, which required immediate attention, were those which related to the Little Democrat. On reading them, a messenger was immediately despatched for the secretary, but he had retired, indisposed, to his seat in the country. Upon hearing this, the President instantly addressed a letter to him, of which the following is an extract. "What is to be done in the case of the Little Sarah, now at Chester? Is the minister of the French republic to set the acts of this government at defiance *with impunity*,—and then threaten the executive with an appeal to the people? What must the world think of such conduct? and of the government of the United States in submitting to it?

"These are serious questions—circumstances press for decision;—and as you have had time to consider them, (upon me they come unexpectedly,) I wish to know your opinion upon them even before to-morrow—for the vessel may then be gone."

In answer to this letter, the secretary stated the assurances which had on that day been given to him by Mr. Genet, that the vessel would not sail before the President's decision respecting her should be made. In consequence of this information, immediate coercive measures were suspended; and in the council of the succeeding day it was determined to retain in port all[1] privateers which had been equipped by any of the belligerent powers within the United States. This determination was immediately communicated to Mr. Genet; but, in contempt of it, the Little Democrat proceeded on her cruise.

In this, as in every effort made by the executive to maintain the neutrality of the United States, that great party which denominated itself "THE PEOPLE," could perceive only a settled hostility to France and to liberty, a tame subserviency to British policy, and a desire, by provoking France, to engage America in the war, for the purpose of extirpating republican principles.[1]

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[1] They were particularly enumerated, and the decision was also extended to the ship Jane, an English armed merchantman, alleged by Mr. Genet to be a privateer, and the governor was requested to attend to her, and if he found her augmenting her force and about to depart, to cause her to be stopped.

The Jane had augmented her armament by replacing four old gun-carriages with new ones, and opening two new port-holes. The request of the British consul that these alterations might be allowed was peremptorily rejected, and directions were given that she should be restored precisely to the situation in which she entered the port. Had she attempted to sail without obeying these orders, Governor Mifflin had taken measures to stop her at Mud Island.

The administration received strong additional evidence of the difficulty that would attend an adherence to the system which had been commenced, in the acquittal of Gideon Henfield.

A prosecution had been instituted against this person who had enlisted in Charleston on board a French privateer equipped in that port, which had brought her prizes into the port of Philadelphia. This prosecution had been directed under the advice of the attorney general, who was of opinion, that persons of this description were punishable for having violated subsisting treaties, which, by the constitution, are the supreme law of the land; and that they were also indictable at common law, for disturbing the peace of the United States.

It could not be expected that the democratic party would be inattentive to an act so susceptible of misrepresentation. Their papers sounded the alarm; and it was universally asked, "what law had been offended, and under what statute was the indictment supported? Were the American people already prepared to give to a proclamation the force of a legislative act, and to subject themselves to the will of the executive? But if they were already sunk to such a state of degradation, were they to be punished for violating a proclamation which had not been published when the offence was committed, if indeed it could be termed an offence to engage with France, combating for liberty against the combined despots of Europe?"

As the trial approached, a great degree of sensibility was displayed; and the verdict in favour of Henfield was celebrated with extravagant marks of joy and exultation. It bereaved the executive of the strength to be derived from an opinion, that punishment might be legally inflicted on those who should openly violate the rules prescribed for the preservation of neutrality; and exposed that department to the obloquy of having attempted a measure which the laws would not justify.

About this time, a question growing out of the war between

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[1] See note, No. XI. at the end of the volume.

France and Britain, the decision of which would materially affect the situation of the United States, was presented to the consideration of the executive.

It will be recollected that during the war which separated America from Britain, the celebrated compact termed the *armed neutrality* was formed in the north of Europe, and announced to the belligerent powers. A willingness to acquiesce in the principles it asserted, one of which was that free bottoms should make free goods, was expressed by the governments engaged in the war, with the single exception of Great Britain. But, however favourably the United States, as a belligerent, might view a principle which would promote the interests of inferior maritime powers, they were not willing, after the termination of hostilities, to enter into engagements for its support which might endanger their future peace; and, in this spirit, instructions were given to their ministers in Europe.

This principle was ingrafted into the treaty of commerce with France; but no stipulation on the subject had been made with England. It followed, that, with France, the character of the bottom was imparted to the cargo; but with Britain, the law of nations was the rule by which the respective rights of the belligerent and neutral were to be decided.

Construing this rule to give security to the goods of a friend in the bottoms of an enemy, and to subject the goods of an enemy to capture in the bottoms of a friend, the British cruisers took French property out of American vessels, and their courts condemned it as lawful prize.

Mr. Genet had remonstrated against the acquiescence of the American executive in this exposition of the law of nations, in such terms as he was accustomed to employ; and on the 9th of July, in the moment of the contest respecting the Little Democrat, he had written a letter demanding an immediate and positive answer to the question, what measures the President had taken, or would take, to cause the American flag to be respected? He observed, that "as the English would continue to carry off, with impunity, French citizens, and French property found on board of American vessels, without embarrassing themselves with the philosophical principles proclaimed by the President of the United States," and as the embarrassing engagements of

France deprived her of the privileges of making reprisals at every point, it was necessary for the interests of both nations, quickly to agree on taking other measures.

Not receiving an immediate answer, Mr. Genet, towards the close of July, again addressed the secretary of state on the subject. In this extraordinary letter, after complaining of the insults offered to the American flag by seizing the property of Frenchmen confided to its protection, he added, "your political rights are counted for nothing. In vain do the principles of neutrality establish, that friendly vessels make friendly goods; in vain, sir, does the President of the United States endeavour, by his proclamation, to reclaim the observation of this maxim; in vain does the desire of preserving peace lead to sacrifice the interests of France to that of the moment; in vain does the thirst of riches preponderate over honour in the political balance of America: all this management, all this condescension, all this humility, end in nothing; our enemies laugh at it; and the French, too confident, are punished for having believed that the American nation had a flag, that they had some respect for their laws, some conviction of their strength, and entertained some sentiment of their dignity. It is not possible for me, sir, to paint to you all my sensibility at this scandal which tends to the diminution of your commerce, to the oppression of ours, and to the debasement and vilification of republics. It is for the Americans to make known their generous indignation at this outrage; and I must confine myself to demand of you a second time, to inform me of the measures which you have taken, in order to obtain restitution of the property plundered from my fellow citizens, under the protection of your flag. It is from our government they have learnt that the Americans were our allies, that the American nation was sovereign, and that they knew how to make themselves respected. It is then under the very same sanction of the French nation, that they have confided their property and persons to the safeguard of the American flag; and on her, they submit the care of causing those rights to be respected. But if our fellow citizens have been deceived, if you are not in a condition to maintain the sovereignty of your people, speak; we have guaranteed it when slaves, we shall be able to render it formidable, having become freemen."

On the day preceding the date of this offensive letter, the secretary of state had answered that of the 9th of July; and, without noticing the unbecoming style in which the decision of the executive was demanded, had avowed and defended the opinion, that "by the general law of nations, the goods of an enemy found in the vessels of a friend are lawful prize." This fresh insult might therefore be passed over in silence.

While a hope remained that the temperate forbearance of the executive, and the unceasing manifestations of its friendly dispositions towards the French republic, might induce the minister of that nation to respect the rights of the United States, and to abstain from violations of their sovereignty, an anxious solicitude not to impair the harmony which he wished to maintain between the two republics, had restrained the President from adopting those measures respecting Mr. Genet, which the conduct of that gentleman required. He had seen a foreign minister usurp within the territories of the United States some of the most important rights of sovereignty, and persist, after the prohibition of the government, in the exercise of those rights. In asserting this extravagant claim, so incompatible with national independence, the spirit in which it originated had been pursued, and the haughty style of a superior had been substituted for the respectful language of diplomacy. He had seen the same minister undertake to direct the civil government; and to pronounce, in opposition to the decisions of the executive, in what departments of the constitution of the United States had placed certain great national powers. To render this state of things more peculiarly critical and embarrassing, the person most instrumental in producing it, had, from his arrival, thrown himself into the arms of the people, stretched out to receive him; and was emboldened by their favour, to indulge the hope of succeeding in his endeavours, either to overthrow their government, or to bend it to his will. But the full experiment had now been made; and the result was a conviction not to be resisted, that moderation would only invite additional injuries, and that the present insufferable state of things could be terminated only by procuring the removal of the French minister, or by submitting to become, in his hands, the servile instrument of hostility against the enemies of his nation. Information was continually received from every quarter, of fresh aggressions on the principles established by the government; and, while the executive was thus openly disregarded and contemned, the members of the administration were reproached in all the papers of an active and restless opposition, as the violators of the national faith, the partisans of monarchy, and the enemies of liberty and of France.

The unwearied efforts of that department to preserve that station in which the various treaties in existence had placed the nation, were incessantly calumniated[1] as infractions of those treaties, and ungrateful attempts to force the United States into the war against France.

The judgment of the President was never hastily formed; but, once made up, it was seldom to be shaken. Before the last letter of Mr. Genet was communicated to him, he seems to have determined to take decisive measures respecting that minister.

That the course to be pursued might be well considered, the secretary of state was requested to collect all the correspondence with him, to be laid before a cabinet council about to be held for the purpose of adjusting a complete system of rules to be observed by the belligerents in the ports of the United States. These rules were discussed at several meetings, and finally, on the third of August, received the unanimous approbation of the cabinet. They[2] evidence the settled purpose of the executive, faithfully to observe all the national engagements, and honestly to perform the duties of that neutrality in which the war found them, and in which those engagements left them free to remain.

In the case of the minister of the French republic, it was unanimously agreed that a letter should be written to Mr. Morris, the minister of the United States at Paris, stating the conduct of Mr. Genet, resuming the points of difference which had arisen between the government and that gentleman, assigning the reasons for the opinion of the former, desiring the recall of the latter, and directing that this letter, with those which had passed between Mr. Genet and the secretary of state, should be laid before the executive of the French government.

To a full view of the transactions of the executive with Mr. Genet, and an ample justification of its measures, this able diplomatic performance adds assurances of unvarying attachment to France, expressed in such terms of unaffected sensibility, as to render it impossible to suspect the sincerity of the concluding sentiment—"that, after independence and self-government, there was nothing America more sincerely wished than perpetual friendship with them."

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[1] See note, No. XII. at the end of the volume.

[2] See note, No. XIII, at the end of the volume.

An adequate idea of the passion it excited in Mr. Genet, who received the communication in September, at New York, can be produced only by a perusal of his letter addressed, on that occasion, to the secretary of state. The asperity of his language was not confined to the President, whom he still set at defiance, whom he charged with transcending the limits prescribed by the constitution, and of whose accusation before congress he spoke as an act of justice "which the American people, which the French people, which all free people were interested to reclaim:" nor to those "gentlemen who had been painted to him so often as aristocrats, partisans of monarchy, partisans of England, and consequently enemies of the principles which all good Frenchmen had embraced with a religious enthusiasm." Its bitterness was also extended to the secretary of state himself, whom he had been induced to consider as his personal friends, and who had, he said, "initiated him into mysteries which had inflamed his hatred against all those who aspire to an absolute power."

During these deliberations, Mr. Genet was received in New York with the same marks of partiality to his nation, and of flattering regard to himself, which had been exhibited in the more southern states. At this place too, he manifested the same desire to encourage discontent at the conduct of the government, and to embark America in the quarrel, by impressing an opinion that the existence of liberty depended on the success of the French republic, which he had uniformly avowed. In answer to an address from the republican citizens of New York, who had spoken of the proclamation of neutrality as relating only to acts of open hostility, not to the feelings of the heart; and who had declared that they would "exultingly sacrifice a liberal portion of their dearest interests could there result, on behalf of the French republic, an adequate advantage;" he said —"in this respect I can not but interpret as you have done the declaration of your government. They must know that the strict performance of treaties is the best and safest policy; they must know that good faith alone can inspire respectability to a nation; that a pusillanimous conduct provokes insult, and brings upon a country those very dangers which it weakly means to avert.

"There is indeed too much reason to fear that you are involved in the general conspiracy of tyrants against liberty. They never will, they never can forgive you for having been the first to proclaim the rights of man. But you will force them to respect you by pursuing with firmness the only path which is consistent with your national honour and dignity.

"The cause of France is the cause of all mankind, and no nation is more deeply interested than you are in its success. Whatever fate awaits her, you are ultimately to share. But the cause of liberty is great and it shall prevail.

"And if France, under a despotic yoke, has been able so successfully to assert your rights, they can never again be endangered while she is at liberty to exert, in your support, that powerful arm which now defies the combined efforts of a whole world."

While these exertions were successfully making to give increased force, and a wider extent, to opinions which might subvert the system adopted by the executive, Mr. Jay, the chief justice of the United States, and Mr. King, a senator representing the state, arrived in New York from Philadelphia. They had been preceded by a report, which was whispered in private circles, that the French minister had avowed a determination to appeal from the President to the people. The confidential intercourse subsisting between these gentlemen and a part of the administration rendering it probable that this declaration, if made, had been communicated to them, they were asked, whether the report was true? having received the information through a channel[1] which was entitled to the most implicit faith, they answered that it was.

Their having said so was controverted; and they were repeatedly required, in the public papers, to admit or deny that they had made such an assertion. Thus called upon, they published a certificate avowing that they had made the declaration imputed to them.

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[1] They received it from the secretaries of the treasury and of war.

On reflecting men this communication made a serious impression. The recent events in Poland, whose dismemberment and partition were easily traced to the admission of foreign influence, gave additional solemnity to the occurrence, and led to a more intent consideration of the awful causes which would embolden a foreign minister to utter such a threat.

That party, which in the commencement of the contests respecting the constitution was denominated federal, had generally supported the measures of the administration.

That which was denominated anti-federal, had generally opposed those measures. South of the Potomac especially, there were certainly many important exceptions to this arrangement of parties; yet as a general arrangement, it was unquestionably correct.

In the common partialities for France, in the common hope that the revolution in that country would be crowned with success, and would produce important benefits to the human race, they had equally participated; but in the course to be pursued by the United States, the line of separation between the two parties was clear and distinct. The federalists were universally of opinion that, in the existing war, America ought to preserve a neutrality as impartial as was compatible with her treaties; and that those treaties had been fairly and justly construed by the executive. Seduced however by their wishes, and by their affections, they at first yielded implicit faith to the assurances given by Mr. Genet of the disinclination of the French republic to draw them from this eligible position; and from this belief, they receded slowly and reluctantly.

They were inclined to ascribe the bitter invectives which were pronounced against the executive to an inveterate hostility to the government, and to those who administered it; and, when at length they were compelled to perceive that the whole influence of Mr. Genet was employed in stimulating and pointing these invectives, they fondly indulged the hope that his nation would not countenance his conduct. Adding to their undiminished attachment to the chief magistrate, a keen sense of the disgrace, the humiliation, and the danger of permitting the

American government to be forced into any system of measures by the machinations of a foreign minister with the people, they had occasionally endeavoured, through the medium of the press, to keep the public mind correct; and, when it was announced that an appeal to themselves was threatened, they felt impelled by the strongest sentiments of patriotism and regard for national honour, to declare the indignation which the threat had inspired. In every quarter of the union, the people assembled in their districts, and the strength of parties was fully tried. The contest was warm and strenuous. But public opinion appeared to preponderate greatly in favour of neutrality, and of the proclamation by which its observance was directed. It was apparent too, that the American bosom still glowed with ardent affection for their chief magistrate; and that, however successful might have been the shafts directed against some of those who shared his confidence, the arrows aimed at himself had missed their mark.

Yet it was not to be concealed that the indiscreet arrogance of Mr. Genet, the direct insults to the President, and the attachment which many, who were in opposition to the general measures of the administration, still retained for the person of that approved patriot, contributed essentially to the prevalence of the sentiment which was called forth by the occasion.

In the resolutions expressing the strongest approbation of the measures which had been adopted, and the greatest abhorrence of foreign influence, a decided partiality for France was frequently manifested; while in those of a contrary description, respect for the past services of the President, and a willingness to support the executive in the exercise of its constitutional functions, seemed, when introduced, to be reluctantly placed among the more agreeable declarations of detestation for those who sought to dissolve the union between America and France, and of the devotion with which the French revolution ought to be espoused by all the friends of liberty.

The effect which the certificate of Mr. Jay and Mr. King might possibly produce, was foreseen; and Mr. Genet sought to avoid its influence by questioning its veracity. Not only had it never been alleged that the exceptionable expressions were used to the President personally, but it was certain that they had not been uttered in his presence. Affecting not to have adverted to this obvious circumstance, the minister, on the 13th of August, addressed a letter to the chief magistrate, which, being designed for publication, was itself the act he had threatened, in which he subjoined to a detail of his accusations against the executive, the demand of an explicit declaration that he had never intimated to him an intention to appeal to the people.

On the 16th this letter was answered by the secretary of state, who, after acknowledging its receipt by the President, added, "I am desired to observe to you that it is not the established course for the diplomatic characters residing here to have any direct correspondence with him. The secretary of state is the organ through which their communications should pass.

"The President does not conceive it to be within the line of propriety or duty, for him to bear evidence against a declaration, which, whether made to him or others, is perhaps immaterial; he therefore declines interfering in the case."

Seldom has more conclusive testimony been offered of the ascendancy which, in the conflicts of party, the passions maintain over reason, than was exhibited, on this occasion, by the zealous partisans of the French minister. It might have been expected that, content with questioning the fact, or with diverting the obloquy attending it from the French nation, no American would have been found hardy enough to justify it; and but few, to condemn those gentlemen by whose means it had reached the public ear. Nothing could be farther removed from this expectation, than the conduct that was actually observed. The censure merited by the expressions themselves fell, not upon the person who had used them, but upon those who had communicated them to the public. Writers of considerable political eminence, charged them as being members of a powerful faction who were desirous of separating America from France, and connecting her with England, for the purpose of introducing the British constitution.

As if no sin could equal the crime of disclosing to the people a truth which, by inducing reflection, might check the flood of that passion for France which was deemed the surest test of patriotism, the darkest motives were assigned for the disclosure, and the reputation of those who made it has scarcely been rescued by a lapse of years, and by a change of the subjects of controversy, from the peculiar party odium with which they were at the time overwhelmed.

Sentiments of a still more extraordinary nature were openly avowed. In a republican country, it was said, the people alone were the basis of government. All powers being derived from them, might, by them, be withdrawn at pleasure. They alone were the authors of the law, and to them alone, must the ultimate decision on the interpretation belong. From these delicate and popular truths, it was inferred, that the doctrine that the sovereignty of the nation resided in the departments of government was incompatible with the principles of liberty; and that, if Mr. Genet dissented from the interpretation given by the President to existing treaties, he might rightfully appeal to the real sovereign whose agent the President was, and to whom he was responsible for his conduct. Is the President, it was asked, a *consecrated* character, that an appeal from his decisions must be considered criminal? or are the people in such a state of monarchical degradation, that to speak of consulting them is an offence as great, as if America groaned under a dominion equally tyrannical with the old monarchy of France?

It was soon ascertained that Mr. Dallas, to whom this threat of appealing to the people had been delivered, did not admit that the precise words had been used. Mr. Genet then, in the coarsest terms, averred the falsehood of the certificate which had been published, and demanded from the attorney general, and from the government, that Mr. Jay and Mr. King should be indicted for a libel upon himself and his nation. That officer accompanied his refusal to institute this information with the declaration that any other gentleman of the profession, who might approve and advise the attempt, could be at no loss to point out a mode which would not require his intervention.

While the minister of the French republic thus loudly complained of the unparalleled injury he received from being charged with employing a particular exceptionable phrase, he seized every fair occasion to carry into full execution the threat which he denied having made. His letters, written for the purpose of publication, and actually published by himself, accused the executive, before the tribunal of the people, on those specific points, from its decisions respecting which he was said to have threatened the appeal. As if the offence lay, not in perpetrating the act, but in avowing an intention to perpetrate it, this demonstration of his designs did not render his advocates the less vehement in his support, nor the less acrimonious in reproaching the administration, as well as Mr. Jay and Mr. King.

Whilst insult was thus added to insult, the utmost vigilance of the executive officers was scarcely sufficient to maintain an observance of the rules which had been established for preserving neutrality in the American ports. Mr. Genet persisted in refusing to acquiesce in those rules; and fresh instances of attempts to violate them were continually recurring. Among these, was an outrage committed in Boston, too flagrant to be overlooked.

A schooner, brought as a prize into the port of Boston by a French privateer, was claimed by the British owner; who instituted proceedings at law against her, for the purpose of obtaining a decision on the validity of her capture. She was rescued from the possession of the marshal, by an armed force acting under the authority of Mr. Duplaine, the French consul, which was detached from a frigate then lying in port. Until the frigate sailed, she was guarded by a part of the crew; and, notwithstanding the determination of the American government that the consular courts should not exercise a prize jurisdiction within the territories of the United States, Mr. Duplaine declared his purpose to take cognizance of the case.

To this act of open defiance, it was impossible for the President to submit. The facts being well attested, the exequatur which had been granted to Mr. Duplaine was revoked, and he was forbidden further to exercise the consular functions. It will excite surprise that even this necessary measure could not escape censure. The self proclaimed champions of liberty discovered in it a violation of the constitution, and a new indignity to France.

Mr. Genet did not confine his attempts to employ the force of America against the enemies of his country to maritime enterprises. On his first arrival, he is understood to have planned an expedition against the Floridas, to be carried on from Georgia; and another against Louisiana, to be carried on from the western parts of the United States. Intelligence was received that the principal officers were engaged; and the temper of the people inhabiting the western country was such as to furnish some ground for the apprehension, that the restraints which the executive was capable of imposing, would be found too feeble to prevent the execution of this plan. The remonstrances of the Spanish commissioners on this subject, however, were answered with explicit assurances that the government would effectually interpose to defeat any expedition from the territories of the United States against those of Spain; and the governor of Kentucky was requested to co-operate in frustrating this improper application of the military resources of his state.

It was not by the machinations of the French minister alone that the neutrality of the United States was endangered. The party which, under different pretexts, urged measures the inevitable tendency of which was war, derived considerable aid, in their exertions to influence the passions of the people, from the conduct of others of the belligerent powers. The course pursued both by Britain and Spain rendered the task of the executive still more arduous, by furnishing weapons to the enemies of neutrality, capable of being wielded with great effort.

The resentment excited by the rigour with which the maritime powers of Europe retained the monopoly of their colonial commerce, had, without the aid of those powerful causes which had lately been brought into operation, been directed peculiarly against Great Britain. These resentments had been greatly increased. That nation had not mitigated the vexations and inconveniencies which war necessarily inflicts on neutral trade, by any relaxations in her colonial policy.

To this rigid and repulsive system, that of France presented a perfect contrast. Either influenced by the politics of the moment, or suspecting that, in a contest with the great maritime nations of Europe, her commerce must search for security in other bottoms than her own, she opened the ports of her colonies to every neutral flag, and offered to the United States a new treaty, in which it was understood that every mercantile distinction between Americans and Frenchmen should be totally abolished.

With that hasty credulity which, obedient to the wishes, can not await the sober and deliberate decisions of the judgment, the Americans ascribed this change, and these propositions, to the liberal genius of freedom; and expected the new commercial and political systems to be equally durable. As if, in the term REPUBLIC, the avaricious spirit of commercial monopoly would lose its influence over men; as if the passions were to withdraw from the management of human affairs, and leave the helm to the guidance of reason, and of disinterested philanthropy; a vast proportion of the American people believed this novel system to be the genuine offspring of new-born liberty; and consequently expected that, from the success of the republican arms, a flood of untried good was to rush upon the world.

The avidity with which the neutral merchants pressed forward to reap the rich and tempting harvest offered to them by the regulations and the wants of France, presented a harvest not less rich and tempting to the cruisers of her enemies. Captures to a great extent were made, some with, others without, justifiable cause; and the irritations inseparable from disappointment in gathering the fruits of a gainful traffic, were extensively communicated to the agricultural part of society.

The vexations on the ocean to which neutrals are commonly exposed during war, were aggravated by a measure of the British cabinet, which war was not admitted to justify.

The vast military exertions of the French republic had carried many hands from their usual occupations, to the field; and the measures of government, added to the internal commotions, had discouraged labour by rendering its profits insecure. These causes, aided perhaps by unfavourable seasons, had produced a scarcity which threatened famine. This state of things suggested to their enemies the policy of increasing the internal distress, by cutting off the external supply. In execution of this plan, the British cruisers were instructed "to stop all vessels loaded wholly or in part with corn, flour, or meal, bound to any port in France, or any port occupied by the armies of France, and to send them to such ports as shall be most convenient, in order that such corn, meal, or flour, may be purchased on behalf of his majesty's government and the ships be relieved after such purchase, and after a due allowance for freight; or that the masters of such ships on giving due security, to be approved by the court of admiralty, be permitted to proceed to dispose of their cargoes of corn, meal, or flour, in the ports of any country in amity with his majesty."

In the particular character of the war, and in the general expressions of some approved modern writers on the law of nations, the British government sought a justification of this strong measure. But by neutrals generally, it was deemed an unwarrantable invasion of their rights; and the remonstrances made against it by the American government in particular, were serious and earnest. This attempt to make a principle, which was understood to be applicable only to blockaded places, subservient to the impracticable plan of starving an immense agricultural nation, was resisted with great strength of reasoning by the administration; and added, not inconsiderably, to the resentment felt by the body of the people.[1]

Hostilities on the ocean disclosed still another source of irritation, which added its copious stream to the impetuous torrent which threatened to sweep America into the war that desolated Europe.

The British government had long been accustomed to resort to the practice of manning their fleet by impressment. The exercise of this prerogative had not been confined to the land. Merchantmen in their ports, and even at sea, were visited, and mariners were taken out of them, to be employed in the royal navy. The profits of trade enabling neutral merchants to give high wages, British sailors were tempted, in great numbers, to enter their service; but the neutral ship furnished no protection. Disregarding the bottom in which they sailed, the officers of the navy impressed them wherever found, often leaving scarcely hands enough to navigate the vessel into port.

The Americans were peculiarly exposed to the abuse to which such usages are liable. Descended from the same ancestors, and speaking the same language, the distinction between them and the English, though in general sufficiently marked, was not always so visible as to prevent unintentional error; nor were the captains of ships of war, at all times, very solicitous to avoid mistake. Native Americans, therefore, were frequently impressed, and compelled to serve against the French republic.

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[1] See note, No. XIV, at the end of the volume.

The British cabinet disclaimed all pretensions to the impressment of real American citizens, and declared officially a willingness to discharge them, on the establishment of their citizenship. But time was necessary to procure the requisite testimonials; and those officers who had notoriously offended in this respect, were not so discountenanced by their government as to be deterred from a repetition of the offence. There was too, one class of citizens, concerning whose rights a difference of opinion prevailed, which has not even yet been adjusted. These were British subjects who had migrated to, and been adopted by, the United States.

The continuance of the Indian war added still another item to this catalogue of discontents.

The efforts of the United States to make a treaty with the savages of the Miamis had proved abortive. The Indians insisted on the Ohio as the boundary between them and the whites; and, although the American commissioners expressed a willingness to relinquish some of the lands purchased at the treaty of fort Harmar, and pressed them to propose some line between the boundary established by that treaty and the Ohio, they adhered inflexibly to their original demand.

It was extensively believed in America, and information collected from the Indians countenanced the opinion, that they were encouraged by the government of Canada to persevere in this claim, and that the treaty was defeated by British influence. The conviction was universal that this influence would continue so long as the posts south of the lakes should be occupied by British troops; and the uneasiness which the detention of those posts created, daily acquired strength. Unfortunately, the original pretext for detaining them was not yet removed. The courts of the United States had not yet declared that British debts contracted before the war, were recoverable. In one of the circuits, a decision had been recently made, partly favourable, and partly unfavourable, to the claim of the creditor. To this decision writs of error had been brought, and the case was depending before the supreme court. The motives therefore originally assigned for holding the posts on the lakes still remained; and, as it was a maxim with the executive "to place an adversary clearly in the wrong," and it was expected that the existing impediments to the fulfilment of the treaty on the part of the United States would soon be done away, it was thought unadviseable, had the military force of the union been equal to the object, to seize those posts, until their surrender could be required in consequence of a complete execution of the treaty. In the mean time, the British minister was earnestly pressed upon the subject.

This prudent conduct was far from being satisfactory to the people. Estimating at nothing, infractions made by themselves, and rating highly those committed by the opposite party, they would, in any state of things, have complained loudly of this act of the British government. But, agitated as they were by the various causes which were perpetually acting on their passions, it is not wonderful that an increased influence was given to this measure; that it should be considered as conclusive testimony of British hostility, and should add to the bitterness with which the government was reproached for attempting a system "alike friendly and impartial to the belligerent powers."

The causes of discontent which were furnished by Spain, though less the theme of public declamation, continued to be considerable.

The American ministers at Madrid could make no progress in their negotiation. The question of limits remained unsettled, and the Mississippi was still closed against the Americans. In addition to these subjects of disquiet, the southern states were threatened with war from the Creeks and Cherokees, who were, with good reason, believed to be excited to hostility by the Spanish government. Of these irritating differences, that which related to the Mississippi was far the most operative, and embarrassing. The imagination, especially when warmed by discontent, bestows on a good which is withheld, advantages much greater than the reality will justify; and the people of the western country were easily persuaded to believe that the navigation of the Mississippi was a mine of wealth which would at once enrich them. That jealousy which men so readily entertain of the views of those with whom they do not associate, had favoured the efforts made by the enemies of the administration, to circulate the opinion that an opposition of interests existed between the eastern and the western people, and that the endeavours of the executive to open their great river were feeble and insincere. At a meeting of the Democratic Society in Lexington, in Kentucky, this sentiment was unanimously avowed in terms of peculiar disrespect to the government; and a committee was appointed to open a correspondence with the inhabitants of the whole western country, for the purpose of uniting them on this all important subject, and of preparing on it a remonstrance to the President and congress of the United States, to be expressed "in the bold, decent and determined language, proper to be used by injured freemen when they address the servants of the people." They claimed much merit for their moderation in having thus long, out of regard to their government, and affection for their fellow citizens on the Atlantic, abstained from the use of those means which they possessed for the assertion of what they termed a natural and unalienable right; and seemed to indicate the opinion that this forbearance could not be long continued. Without regarding the determination of Spain in the case, or the poverty of the means placed in the hands of the executive for inducing a change in this determination, they demanded from the government the free use of the Mississippi, as if only an act of the will was necessary to insure it to them. Not even the probability that the public and intemperate expression of these dangerous dispositions would perpetuate the evil, could moderate them. This restless uneasy temper gave additional importance to the project of an expedition against Louisiana, which had been formed by Mr. Genet.

These public causes for apprehending hostilities[1] with Spain, were strengthened by private communications. The government had received intelligence from their ministers in Europe that propositions had been made by the cabinet of Madrid to that of London, the object of which was the United States. The precise nature of these propositions was not ascertained, but it was understood generally, that their tendency was hostile.

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[1] The state of affairs was so inauspicious to the continuance of peace that in a letter written in the month of June, to the secretary of war, the President thus expressed himself. "It is of great importance that this government should be fully informed of the Spanish force in the Floridas, the troops which have lately arrived, the number of their posts, and the strength and situation of each; together with such other circumstances as would enable it to adopt correspondent measures, in case we should, in spite of our endeavours to avoid it, get embroiled with that nation. It would be too improvident, might be too late, and certainly would be disgraceful, to have this information to obtain when our plans ought to be formed." After suggesting the propriety of making the proper inquiries in a particular channel, he added, "I point you to the above as one source only of information. My desire to obtain knowledge of these facts leads me to request with equal earnestness, that you would improve every other to ascertain them with certainty. No reasonable expense should be spared to accomplish objects of such magnitude in times so critical."

Thus unfavourable to the pacific views of the executive were the circumstances under which congress was to assemble.

CHAPTER IX

A MALIGNANT fever, believed to be infectious, had, through part of the summer and autumn, severely afflicted 1793. the city of Philadelphia, and dispersed the officers of the executive government. Although the fear of contagion was not entirely dispelled when the time for the meeting of congress arrived, yet, such was the active zeal of parties, and such the universal expectation that important executive communications would be made, and that legislative measures not less important would be founded on them, that both houses were full on the first day, and a joint committee waited on the President with the usual information that they were ready to receive his communications.

On the fourth of December, at twelve, the President met both houses in the senate chamber. His speech was moderate, firm, dignified, and interesting. It commenced with his own re-election, his feelings at which were thus expressed—

"Since the commencement of the term for which I have been again called into office, no fit occasion has arisen for expressing to my fellow-citizens at large, the deep and respectful sense which I feel of the renewed testimony of public approbation. While on the one hand, it awakened my gratitude for all those instances of affectionate partiality with which I have been honoured by my country; on the other, it could not prevent an earnest wish for that retirement, from which no private consideration could ever have torn me. But, influenced by the belief that my conduct would be estimated according to its real motives, and that the people, and the authorities derived from them, would support exertions having nothing personal for their object, I have obeyed the suffrage which commanded me to resume the executive power; and I humbly implore that Being on whose will the fate of nations depends, to crown with success our mutual endeavours for the general happiness."

Passing to those measures which had been adopted by the executive for the regulation of its conduct towards the belligerent nations, he observed, "as soon as the war in Europe had embraced those powers with whom the United States have the most extensive relations, there was reason to apprehend that our intercourse with them might be interrupted, and our disposition for peace drawn into question by suspicions too often entertained by belligerent nations. It seemed therefore to be my duty to admonish our citizens of the consequence of a contraband trade, and of hostile acts to any of the parties; and to obtain, by a declaration of the existing state of things, an easier admission of our rights to the immunities belonging to our situation. Under these impressions the proclamation which will be laid before you was issued.

"In this posture of affairs, both new and delicate, I resolved to adopt general rules which should conform to the treaties, and assert the privileges of the United States. These were reduced into a system, which shall be communicated to you."

After suggesting those legislative provisions on this subject, the necessity of which had been pointed out by experience, he proceeded to say,

"I can not recommend to your notice measures for the fulfilment of *our* duties to the rest of the world, without again pressing upon you the necessity of placing ourselves in a condition of complete defence, and of exacting from *them* the fulfilment of their duties towards us. The United States ought not to indulge a persuasion that, contrary to the order of human events, they will forever keep at a distance those painful appeals to arms with which the history of every nation abounds. There is a rank due to the United States among nations which will be withheld, if not absolutely lost, by the reputation of weakness. If we desire to avoid insult, we must be able to repel it; if we desire to secure peace—one of the most powerful instruments of our prosperity—it must be known that we are, at all times, ready for war."

These observations were followed by a recommendation to augment the supply of arms and ammunition in the magazines, and to improve the militia establishment.

After referring to a communication to be subsequently made for occurrences relative to the connexion of the United States with Europe, which had, he said, become extremely interesting; and after reviewing Indian affairs, he particularly addressed the house of representatives. Having presented to them in detail some subjects of which it was proper they should be informed, he added;—"no pecuniary consideration is more urgent than the regular redemption and discharge of the public debt; on none can delay be more injurious, or an economy of time more valuable.

"The productiveness of the public revenues hitherto has continued to be equal to the anticipations which were formed of it; but it is not expected to prove commensurate with all the objects which have been suggested. Some auxiliary provisions will therefore, it is presumed, be requisite; and it is hoped that these may be made consistently with a due regard to the convenience of our citizens, who can not but be sensible of the true wisdom of encountering a small present addition to their contributions, to obviate a future accumulation of burdens."

The speech was concluded with the following impressive exhortation.

"The several subjects to which I have now referred, open a wide range to your deliberations, and involve some of the choicest interests of our common country. Permit me to bring to your remembrance the magnitude of your task. Without an unprejudiced coolness, the welfare of the government may be hazarded; without harmony, as far as consists with freedom of sentiment, its dignity may be lost. But, as the legislative proceedings of the United States will never, I trust, be reproached for the want of temper, or of candour, so shall not the public happiness languish from the want of my strenuous and warmest co-operation."

The day succeeding that on which this speech was delivered, a special message was sent to both houses, containing some of the promised communications relative to the connexion of the United States with foreign powers.

After suggesting as a motive for this communication that it not only disclosed "matter of interesting inquiry to the legislature," but, "might indeed give rise to deliberations to which they alone were competent;" the President added—"the representative and executive bodies of France have manifested generally a friendly attachment to this country; have given advantages to our commerce and navigation; and have made overtures for placing these advantages on permanent ground. A decree however of the national assembly, subjecting vessels laden with provisions to be carried into their ports, and making enemy goods lawful prize in the vessel of a friend, contrary to our treaty, though revoked at one time as to the United States, has been since extended to their vessels also, as has been recently stated to us. Representations on the subject will be immediately given in charge to our minister there, and the result shall be communicated to the legislature.

"It is with extreme concern I have to inform you that the person whom they have unfortunately appointed their minister plenipotentiary here, has breathed nothing of the friendly spirit of the nation which sent him. Their tendency on the contrary has been to involve us in a war abroad and discord and anarchy at home. So far as his acts, or those of his agents, have threatened an immediate commitment in the war, or flagrant insult to the authority of the laws, their effect has been counteracted by the ordinary cognizance of the laws, and by an exertion of the powers confided to me. Where their danger was not imminent, they have been borne with, from sentiments of regard to his nation, from a sense of their friendship towards us, from a conviction that they would not suffer us to remain long exposed to the actions of a person who has so little respected our mutual dispositions, and, I will add, from a reliance on the firmness of my fellow citizens in their principles of peace and order. In the mean time I have respected and pursued the stipulations of our treaties, according to what I judged their true sense; and have withheld no act of friendship which their affairs have called for from us, and which justice to others left us free to perform. I have gone further. Rather than employ force for the restitution of certain vessels which I deemed the United States bound to restore, I thought it more adviseable to satisfy the parties by avowing it to be my opinion, that, if restitution were not made, it would be incumbent on the United States to make compensation."

The message next proceeded to state that inquiries had been instituted respecting the vexations and spoliations committed on the commerce of the United States, the result of which when received would be communicated.

The order issued by the British government on the 8th of June, and the measures taken by the executive of the United States in consequence thereof, were briefly noticed; and the discussions which had taken place in relation to the non-execution of the treaty of peace were also mentioned. The message was then concluded with a reference to the negotiations with Spain. "The public good," it was said, "requiring that the present state of these should be made known to the legislature in confidence only, they would be the subject of a separate and subsequent communication."

This message was accompanied with copies of the correspondence between the secretary of state and the French minister on the points of difference which subsisted between the two governments, together with several documents necessary for the establishment of particular facts; and with the letter written by Mr. Jefferson to Mr. Morris, which justified the conduct of the United States by arguments too clear to be misunderstood, and too strong ever to be encountered.

The extensive discussions which had taken place relative to the non-execution of the treaty of peace, and the correspondence produced by the objectionable measures which had been adopted by the British government during the existing war, were also laid before the legislature.

In a popular government, the representatives of the people may generally be considered as a mirror, reflecting truly the passions and feelings which govern their constituents. In the late elections, the strength of parties had been tried; and the opposition had derived so much aid from associating the cause of France with its own principles, as to furnish much reason to suspect that, in one branch of the legislature at least, it had become the majority. The first act of the house of representatives served to strengthen this suspicion. By each party a candidate for the chair was brought forward; and Mr. Muhlenberg, who was supported by the opposition, was elected by a majority of ten votes, against Mr. Sedgewick whom the federalists supported.

The answer however to the speech of the President, wore no tinge of that malignant and furious spirit which had infused itself into the publications of the day. Breathing the same affectionate attachment to his person and character which had been professed in other times, and being approved by every part of the house, it indicated that the leaders, at least, still venerated their chief magistrate, and that no general intention as yet existed, to involve him in the obloquy directed against his measures.

Noticing that unanimous suffrage by which he had been again called to his present station, "it was," they said, "with equal sincerity and promptitude they embraced the occasion for expressing to him their congratulations on so distinguished a testimony of public approbation, and their entire confidence in the purity and patriotism of the motives which had produced this obedience to the voice of his country. It is," proceeded the address, "to virtues which have commanded long and universal reverence, and services from which have flowed great and lasting benefits, that the tribute of praise may be paid without the reproach of flattery; and it is from the same sources that the fairest anticipations may be derived in favour of the public happiness."

The proclamation of neutrality was approved in guarded terms, and the topics of the speech were noticed in a manner which indicated dispositions cordially to co-operate with the executive.

On the part of the senate also, the answer to the speech was unfeignedly affectionate. In warm terms they expressed the pleasure which the re-election of the President gave them. "In the unanimity," they added, "which a second time marks this important national act, we trace with particular satisfaction, besides the distinguished tribute paid to the virtues and abilities which it recognises, another proof of that discernment, and constancy of sentiments and views, which have hitherto characterized the citizens of the United States." Speaking of the proclamation, they declared it to be "a measure well timed and wise, manifesting a watchful solicitude for the welfare of the nation, and calculated to promote it."

In a few days, a confidential message was delivered, communicating the critical situation of affairs with Spain. The negotiations attempted with that power in regard to the interesting objects of boundary, navigation, and commerce, had been exposed to much delay and embarrassment, in consequence of the changes which the French revolution had effected in the political state of Europe. Meanwhile, the neighbourhood of the Spanish colonies to the United States had given rise to various other subjects of discussion, one of which had assumed a very serious aspect.

Having the best reason to suppose that the hostility of the southern Indians was excited by the agents of Spain, the President had directed the American commissioners at Madrid to make the proper representations on the subject, and to propose that each nation should, with good faith, promote the peace of the other with their savage neighbours.

About the same time, the Spanish government entertained, or affected to entertain, corresponding suspicions of like hostile excitements by the agents of the United States, to disturb their peace with the same nations. The representations which were induced by these real or affected suspicions, were accompanied with pretensions, and made in a style, to which the American executive could not be inattentive. His catholic majesty asserted these claims as a patron and protector of those Indians. He assumed a right to mediate between them and the United States, and to interfere in the establishment of their boundaries. At length, in the very moment when those savages were committing daily inroads on the American frontier, at the instigation of Spain, as was believed, the representatives of that power, complaining of the aggressions of American citizens on the Indians, declared "that the continuation of the peace, good harmony, and perfect friendship of the two nations, was very problematical for the future, unless the United States should take more convenient measures, and of greater energy than those adopted for a long time past."

Notwithstanding the zeal and enthusiasm with which the pretensions of the French republic, as asserted by their minister, continued to be supported out of doors, they found no open advocate in either branch of the legislature. That this circumstance is, in a great measure, to be ascribed to the temperate conduct of the executive, and to the convincing arguments with which its decisions were supported, ought not to be doubted. But when it is recollected that the odium which these decisions excited, sustained no diminution; that the accusation of hostility to France and to liberty, which originated in them, was not retracted; that, when afterwards many of the controverted claims were renewed by France, her former advocates still adhered to her; it is not unreasonable to suppose that other considerations mingled themselves with the conviction which the correspondence laid before the legislature was calculated to produce.

An attack on the administration could be placed on no ground more disadvantageous than on its controversy with Mr. Genet. The conduct and language of that minister were offensive to reflecting men of all parties. The President had himself taken so decisive a part in favour of the measures which had been adopted, that they must be ascribed to him, not to his cabinet; and, of consequence, the whole weight of his personal character must be directly encountered, in an attempt to censure those measures. From this censure it would have been difficult to extricate the person who was contemplated by the party in opposition as its chief; for the secretary of state had urged the arguments of the administration with a degree of ability and earnestness, which ought to have silenced the suspicion that he might not feel their force.

The expression of a legislative opinion, in favour of the points insisted on by the French minister, would probably have involved the nation in a calamitous war, the whole responsibility for which would rest on them.

To these considerations was added another which could not be disregarded. The party in France, to which Mr. Genet owed his appointment, had lost its power; and his fall was the inevitable consequence of the fall of his patrons. That he would probably be recalled was known in America; and that his conduct had been disapproved by his government was generally believed. The future system of the French republic, with regard to the United States, could not be foreseen; and it would be committing something to hazard, not to wait its development.

These objections did not exist to an indulgence of the partialities and prejudices of the nation towards the belligerent powers, in measures suggested by its resentment against Great Britain. But, independent of these considerations, it is scarcely possible to doubt that congress really approved the conduct of the executive with regard to France, and was also convinced that a course of hostility had been pursued by Great Britain, which the national interest and the national honour required them to repel. In the irritable state of the public temper, it was not difficult to produce this opinion.

In addition to the causes of dissatisfaction with Great Britain which have already been suggested, others soon occurred. Under her auspices, a truce for one year had been lately negotiated between Portugal and the Regency of Algiers, which, by withdrawing a small squadron stationed during the war, by the former power, in the Streights, opened a passage into the Atlantic to the cruisers of the latter. The capture of American merchantmen, which was the immediate consequence of this measure, was believed, in the United States, to have been its motive. Not admitting the possibility that a desire to extricate Portugal from a war unproductive of any advantages, and to leave her maritime force free to act elsewhere, could have induced this interposition of England, the Americans ascribed it, exclusively, to that enmity to their commerce, and to that jealousy of its prosperity, which had, as they conceived, long marked the conduct of those who administered the affairs of that nation.

This transaction was afterwards explained by England, and was ascribed to her desire to serve an ally, and to enable that ally to act more efficaciously in a common cause.

From governments accustomed to trust rather to artifice, than to force or to reason, and influenced by vindictive passions which they have not strength or courage to gratify, hostility may be expected to exert itself in a cruel insidious policy, which unfeelingly dooms individuals to chains, and involves them in ruin, without having a tendency to effect any national object. But the British character rather wounds by its pride, and offends by its haughtiness, and open violence, than injures by the secret indulgence of a malignant, but a paltry and unprofitable revenge: and, certainly, such unworthy motives ought not lightly to be imputed to a great and magnanimous nation, which dares to encounter a world, and risk its existence, for the preservation of its station in the scale of empires, of its real independence, and of its liberty.

But, in believing the views of the British cabinet to be unfriendly to the United States, America was perhaps not entirely mistaken. Indeed, dispositions of a different nature could not reasonably have been expected. It may be denied, but can not be disguised, that the sentiments openly expressed by a great majority of the American people, warranted the opinion that, notwithstanding the exertions of the administration, they were about to arrange themselves, in the war, on the side of France. In a government like that of the United States, no firmness on the part of the chief magistrate can long resist the current of popular opinion; and that opinion, without professing it, unquestionably led to war.

If the character of the British minister at Philadelphia is to be collected from his intercourse with the executive of the country to which he was deputed, there is reason to suppose that his communications to his own government did not diminish the impression which the evidence furnished on this subject, by the American people themselves, was calculated to make. It is therefore not improbable, whatever may be the permanent views of England respecting the commercial prosperity of the United States, that the measures of the British cabinet, about this time were taken in the belief that war between the two nations was a probable event.

Early in the session a report was made by the secretary of state, in pursuance of a resolution of the house of representatives passed on the 23d of February, 1791, requiring him "to report to congress the nature and extent of the privileges and restrictions of the commercial intercourse of the United States with foreign nations, and the measures which he should think proper to be adopted for the improvement of the commerce and navigation of the same."

This report stated the exports of the United States in articles of their own produce and manufacture at nineteen millions, five hundred and eighty-seven thousand, and fifty-five dollars; and the imports at nineteen millions, eight hundred and twenty-three thousand, and sixty dollars.

Of the exports, nearly one half was carried to the kingdom of Great Britain and its dominions; of the imports, about four-fifths were brought from the same countries. The American shipping amounted to two hundred and seventy-seven thousand, five hundred and nineteen tons, of which not quite one-sixth was employed in the trade with Great Britain and its dominions.

In all the nations of Europe, most of the articles produced in the United States were subjected to heavy duties, and some of them were prohibited. In England, the trade of the United States was in the general on as good a footing as the trade of other countries; and several articles were more favoured than the same articles of the growth of other countries.

The statements and arguments of this report tended to enforce the policy of making discriminations which might favour the commerce of the United States with France, and discourage that with England; and which might promote the increase of American navigation as a branch of industry, and a resource of defence.

This was the last official act of the secretary of state. Early in the preceding summer, he had signified to the President his intention to retire in September from the public service; and had, with some reluctance, consented to postpone the execution of this intention to the close of the year. Retaining his purpose, he resigned his office on the last day of December.

This gentleman withdrew from political station at a moment when he stood particularly high in the esteem of his countrymen. His determined opposition to the financial schemes which had been proposed by the secretary of the treasury, and approved by the legislative and executive departments of the government; his ardent and undisguised attachment to the revolutionary party in France; the dispositions which he was declared to possess in regard to Great Britain; and the popularity of his opinions respecting the constitution of the United States; had devoted to him that immense party whose sentiments were supposed to comport with his, on most, or all of these interesting subjects. To the opposite party he had, of course, become particularly unacceptable. But the publication of his correspondence with Mr. Genet dissipated much of the prejudice which had been excited against him. He had, in that correspondence, maintained with great ability the opinions embraced by the federalists on those points of difference which had arisen between the two republics; and which, having become universally the subjects of discussion, had in some measure displaced those topics on which parties were previously divided. The partiality for France that was conspicuous through the whole of it, detracted nothing from its merit in the opinion of the friends of the administration, because, however decided their determination to support their own government in a controversy with any nation whatever, they felt all the partialities for that republic which the correspondence expressed. The hostility of his enemies therefore was, for a time, considerably lessened, without a corresponding diminution of the attachment of his friends. It would have been impracticable, in office, long to preserve these dispositions. And it would have been difficult to maintain that ascendency which he held over the minds of those who had supported, and probably would continue to support, every pretension of the French republic, without departing from principles and measures which he had openly and ably defended.

He was immediately succeeded by Mr. Edmund Randolph; and the office of attorney general was filled by Mr. William Bradford, a gentleman of considerable eminence in Pennsylvania.

1794.

On the fourth of January, the house resolved itself into a committee of the whole, on the report of the secretary of state, relative to the privileges and restrictions of the commerce of the United States; when Mr. Madison, after some prefatory observations, laid on the table a series of[1] resolutions for the consideration of the members.

These memorable resolutions embraced almost completely the idea of the report. They imposed an additional duty on the manufactures, and on the tonnage of vessels, of nations having no commercial treaty with the United States; while they reduced the duties already imposed by law, on the tonnage of vessels belonging to nations having such commercial treaty: and they reciprocated the restrictions which were imposed on American navigation.

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[1] See note, No. XV, at the end of the volume.

On the 13th of January, they were taken into consideration, when the debate was opened by Mr. Smith of South Carolina.

After noticing the importance of the subject to the best interests of the United States, he observed that, being purely commercial in its nature, he would exclude from the view he should take of it, those political considerations which some might think connected with it. He imagined it would be right to dismiss, for the present, all questions respecting the Indians, Algerines, and western posts. There would be a time for these questions; and then he should give his opinion upon them with firmness, and according to what he conceived to be the true interests of his country. The regulation of commerce gave of itself sufficient scope for argument, without mixing it with extraneous matter.

After some general observations on the delicacy of the crisis, and on the claims of the resolutions to dispassionate investigation, he proceeded to consider the report on which they were founded.

The great object of that report being to establish a contrast between France and Britain, he would request the attention of the committee to an accurate statement of facts, which, being compared with the report, would enable them to decide on the justness of its inferences.

In the opinion that any late relaxations of the French republic were produced by interests too momentary and fluctuating to be taken as the basis of calculations for a permanent system, he should present a comparative view of the commerce of the United States to those countries, as it stood anterior to the revolution of France. For this purpose, he produced a table which had been formed by a person whose commercial information was highly respectable, from which he said it would appear, notwithstanding the plaudits so generally bestowed on the justice and liberality of the one nation, and the reproaches uttered against the other, that, with the exception of the trifling article of fish oil, the commerce of the United States was not more favoured in France than in Great Britain, and was, in many important articles, more favoured by the latter power, than that of other nations.

Mr. Smith then reviewed, in detail, the advantages and disadvantages attending the sale of the great products of America in the ports of each nation, which, he conceived, were more encouraged by the British than by the French market.

A comparative statement, he added, of the value of the exports of the two countries, would assist in confirming this opinion.

The value of the exports to Great Britain, at the close of the year ending with September, 1789, was nearly double those made to France in the same period: and even the average of the years 1790, 1791 and 1792, gave an annual excess to the exports to Great Britain of three millions, seven hundred and fifty-two thousand, seven hundred and sixty dollars.

The great amount of merchandise imported from Britain, instead of being a grievance, demonstrated, in the opinion of Mr. Smith, the utility of the trade with that country. For the extent of the intercourse between the two nations, several obvious reasons might be assigned. Britain was the first manufacturing country in the world, and was more able, than any other, to supply an assortment of those articles which were required in the United States. She entitled herself, too, to the preference which was given her, by the extensive credit she afforded. To a young country wanting capital, credit was of immense advantage. It enabled them to flourish by the aid of foreign capital, the use of which had, more than any other circumstance, nourished the industry of America.

By the advocates for forcing a trade with France, it was asserted that she could supply the wants of America on better terms than Great Britain. To do this, she must not only sell cheaper, but give credit, which, it was known her merchants either could not, or would not give.

The very necessity of laying a duty on British manufactures, in order to find a sale for those of other countries, was a proof that the first could be purchased on better terms, or were better adapted to the market.

If the object of the resolutions were the encouragement of domestic manufactures, there might be some semblance of argument in their favour. But this is not contemplated. Their avowed object is to turn the course of trade from one nation to another, by means which would subject the citizens of the United States to great inconvenience.

Mr. Smith next proceeded to consider the subject with a view to navigation.

The trade of the United States to Great Britain, for the transportation of their own produce, was as free in American as in British bottoms, a few trifling port charges excepted. In France, they enjoyed the advantages granted to the most favoured nation. Thus far the comparison was in favour of Great Britain. In the West Indies, he admitted the existence of a different state of things. All American bottoms were excluded from the British islands, with the exception of Turks island. In the French islands, vessels under sixty tons were admitted, but this advantage was common to all other nations.

The effect of the difference in the regulations of the two rival nations in respect of navigation, was not so considerable as the secretary of state had supposed. He had stated the tonnage employed in the intercourse with France and her colonies, at 116,410 tons; and that employed in the commerce with Great Britain at 43,580 tons. The secretary was led into this miscalculation by taking for his guide, the actual entries of American bottoms from the dominions of each country in the year. As four voyages are made to·the West Indies, while only two are made to Europe, the vessels employed in the former traffic will be counted four times in the year, and those employed in the latter will be counted only twice in the same period. The deceptiveness of the calculations made from these data had induced a call on the secretary of the treasury for an account of the actual tonnage employed in trade with foreign nations for one year. This account shows that France employs 82,510 tons, and Great Britain 66,582 tons, of American shipping; leaving in favour of France, an excess of 15,928, instead of 72,830 tons, as reported by the secretary of state.

From this comparative view taken of the regulations of the two nations, Mr. Smith conceived himself justified in saying, that the commercial system of Great Britain towards the United

States, far from being hostile, was friendly; and that she made many discriminations in their favour. France, on the contrary, placed them on a better situation than her rival, only in one solitary instance, the unimportant article of fish oil.

If this be a true picture of the existing state of things, and he could not perceive in what it was defective, was it not time, he asked, that the deceptions practised on the people by the eulogists of France and the revilers of Great Britain, should be removed?

The resolutions were supported by Mr. Madison, Mr. Findley, Mr. Nicholas, Mr. Clarke, Mr. Smiley, Mr. Moore, and Mr. Giles.

They admitted the subject before the committee to be of a commercial nature, but conceived it to be impracticable to do justice to the interests of the United States, without some allusions to politics. The question was in some measure general. They were to inquire how far it was the interest of this country by commercial regulations to vary the state of commerce now existing. They were of opinion that most of the injuries proceeding from Great Britain were inflicted for the promotion of her commercial objects, and were to be remedied by commercial resistance. The Indian war, and the Algerine attack, originated both in commercial views, or Great Britain must stand without excuse for instigating the most horrid cruelties. The propositions before the committee were the strongest weapon America possessed, and would, more probably than any other, restore her to all her political and commercial rights. They professed themselves the friends of free trade, and declared the opinion that it would be to the general advantage, if all commerce was free. But this rule was not without its exceptions. The navigation act of Great Britain was a proof of the effect of one exception on the prosperity of national commerce. The effect produced by that act was equally rapid and extensive.

There is another exception to the advantages of a free trade, where the situation of a country is such with respect to another, that by duties on the commodities of that other, it shall not only invigorate its own means of rivalship, but draw from that other the hands employed in the production of those commodities. When such an effect can be produced, it is so much clear gain, and is consistent with the general theory of national rights.

The effect of leaving commerce to regulate itself is to submit it to the regulation of other nations. If the United States had a commercial intercourse with one nation only, and should permit a free trade, while that nation proceeded on a monopolizing system, would not the carrying trade be transferred to that nation, and with it, the maritime strength it confers be heaped upon a rival? Then, in the same proportion to the freedom granted to the vessels of other nations in the United States, and to the burdens other nations impose on American vessels, will be the transfer of those maritime resources.

The propositions before the committee should be examined as they concern navigation, manufactures, and the just principles of discrimination that ought to prevail in their policy to nations having treaties with them.

With respect to navigation, it was conceded that they were not placed upon the same footing by the two nations with whom they had the greatest commercial intercourse. British vessels could bring the produce of all countries into any port of the United States; while American vessels could carry to the ports of Britain only their own commodities, and those only to a part of her dominions. From her ports in the West Indies they were entirely excluded.

To exhibit at a glance the effect of the British navigation act, it was sufficient to compare the quantity of American and British tonnage employed in their intercourse with each other. The former in 1790 amounted to 43,000 tons, and the latter to 240,000 tons. The effect of British policy would be further shown by showing the proportion of domestic tonnage employed at the same time in the intercourse with other European nations. With Spain the American was to the Spanish as five to one, with Portugal six to one, Netherlands fifteen to one, Denmark twelve to one, France five to one, Great Britain one to five. This ratio had by particular circumstances been somewhat changed. From calculations founded on the documents last introduced into the house, it appeared that, at present, the proportion of American to foreign tonnage employed in the American trade was, with Spain as sixteen to one, Portugal seventeen to one, Netherlands twenty-six to one, Denmark fifteen to one, Russia fourteen to one, France between four and five to one, and Great Britain one to three.

The situation of American commerce was the more mortifying when the nature and amount of their exports came to be considered. They were not only necessaries of life, or necessaries for manufactures, and therefore of life to the manufacturer, but their bulkiness gave them an advantage over the exports of every other country. If America, to increase her maritime strength, should secure to herself the transportation of her own commodities, leaving to other nations the transportation of theirs, it would greatly augment the proportion of her shipping and of her sailors.

In relation to manufactures, the regulations existing between the United States and Great Britain were not more equal. Out of the whole amount of manufactured articles imported into this country, which was stated in round numbers at fifteen millions, two hundred and ninety thousand dollars, Great Britain furnished thirteen millions nine hundred and sixty thousand. In the same period, in the year 1789-90, the articles which the United States received from France, a country which actually consumed more of their produce, amounted only to one hundred and fifty-five thousand dollars. The balance of trade, at the same epoch, was greatly in favour of the United States with every other nation, and greatly against them with Britain. Although it might happen in some cases, that other advantages might be derived from an intercourse with a particular nation, which might compensate for an unfavourable balance of trade, it was impossible that this could happen in the intercourse with Great Britain. Other nations, however, viewed a balance of trade against them as a real evil; and Great Britain, in particular, was careful to prevent it. What then must be the feelings of a nation, between whom and the United States the most friendly relations existed, when she saw, not only the balance of trade against her, but that what was thus obtained from her flowed in the same manner into the coffers of one of her most jealous rivals, and inveterate enemies?

The propriety of discriminating between nations having treaties with the United States, and those having none, was admitted in some states before the establishment of the present government, and was sanctioned by that house during their sittings in New York. It was the practice of nations to make such a discrimination. It was necessary to give value to treaties.

The disadvantage of depending on a single nation for articles of necessary consumption was strongly pressed; and it was added as an evil of most serious magnitude, more truly alarming than any other of its features, that this commercial dependence produced an influence in their councils which enabled it, the more inconvenient it became by its constant growth, to throw the more obstacles in the way of a necessary remedy.

They entertained no apprehensions of injurious consequences from adopting the proposed resolutions. The interests of Great Britain would not suffer her to retaliate: and the intercourse between the two countries would not be interrupted further than was required by the convenience and the interests of the United States. But if Great Britain should retaliate, the effects of a commercial conflict would be felt by her, much more sensibly, than by the United States. Its effects would be felt in the shipping business, by the merchants, and above all by the manufacturer.

Calculations were offered, by comparing the total amount of British exports with those to the United States, to prove, that three hundred thousand British manufacturers would be suddenly thrown out of employment, by withdrawing the trade carried on between America and that country. In the complication of distress to which such a measure would reduce them, they would consider the United States as a natural asylum from wretchedness. But whether they remained in discontent at home, or sought their fortune abroad, the evil would be considered and felt by the British government as equally great, and they would surely beware of taking any step that might provoke it.

On the advantages of America in such a contest with a populous and manufacturing country, they dwelt with peculiar earnestness. She produced all the necessaries of life within herself, and could dispense with the articles received from others. But Great Britain, not producing them in sufficient abundance, was dependent on the United States for the supply of her most essential wants. Again, the manufacturer of that country was dependent on this for the sale of his merchandise which was to purchase his bread. Thus was produced a double dependence of Great Britain on the United States. She was also dependent on them for the raw materials which formed the basis of her manufactures. Her West Indies were almost completely dependent. This country furnished the best market for their productions, and was almost the only one which could supply them with the necessaries of life. The regulation excluding the provisions of other foreign countries was entitled to no consideration. It was of ancient date, and had remained untouched because there was no other foreign country by which provisions could be supplied.

That the commercial regulations of Great Britain were as favourable to the United States as to other nations, ought not to satisfy America. If other nations were willing to bear impositions, or were unable to retaliate, their examples were not worthy of imitation. America was in a condition to insist, and ought to insist, on perfect commercial equality.

It was denied that any real advantage was derived from the extensive credit given by the merchants of Great Britain. On the contrary, the use made of British capital was pronounced a great political evil. It increased the unfavourable balance of trade, discouraged domestic manufactures, and promoted luxury. But its greatest mischief was, that it favoured a system of British influence, which was dangerous to their political security.

As the debate advanced, the expressions of exasperation against Britain became stronger; and occasionally allusions were made to those party questions which had long agitated the public mind, with a bitterness which marked their intimate connexion with the conduct of the United States to foreign countries.

It was said to be proper in deciding the question under debate, to take into view political, as well as commercial considerations. Ill will and jealousy had at all times been the predominant features of the conduct of England to the United

States. That government had grossly violated the treaty of peace, had declined a commercial treaty, had instigated the Indians to raise the tomahawk and scalping knife against American citizens, had let loose the Algerines upon their unprotected commerce, and had insulted their flag, and pillaged their trade in every quarter of the world. These facts being notorious, it was astonishing to hear gentlemen ask how had Britain injured their commerce?

The conduct of France, on the contrary, had been warm and friendly. That nation respected American rights, and had offered to enter into commercial arrangements on the liberal basis of perfect reciprocity.

The period which Mr. Smith had taken as that at which the systems of the two nations should be compared with each other, was reprobated with peculiar severity. It was insinuated to proceed from a wish that the United States should directly countenance the restoration of despotism; and much regret was expressed that a distrust of the permanency of the French revolution should be avowed. It was hoped and believed that the present was the settled state of things; and that the old order of things was unsettled for ever: that the French revolution was as much more permanent than had been the French despotism, as was the great fabric of nature, than the petty plastic productions of art. To exclude the period since the revolution, would be to exclude some of the strongest evidences of the friendship of one nation, and the enmity of the other.

The animadversions which had been made on the report of the secretary of state were retorted with acrimony. It was declared that he would not suffer by a comparison in point of intelligence, accuracy, and patriotism, either with the laborious compiler of the table produced by Mr. Smith, or with the gentleman who had been judiciously selected for its interpreter. Some explanations were given of the inaccuracies which had been alleged; and the facts omitted were declared to be immaterial circumstances, which, if inserted, would have swelled the report, without adding to the information it communicated.

In reply to the argument which stated that Great Britain did not, in common years, raise a sufficient quantity of grain for her own consumption, and would consequently afford an increasing market for American wheat and flour, it was remarked that this not only established the all important position of the dependence of that country on this, but suggested a very interesting reflection. It was that the continual increase of debt and paper machinery, will not produce a correspondent increase of ability in the nation to feed itself. That an infinity of paper will not produce an infinity of food.

In contrasting the ability of the two nations to support a commercial conflict, it was said, "Great Britain, tottering under the weight of a king, a court, a nobility, a priesthood, armies, navies, debts, and all the complicated machinery of oppression which serves to increase the number of unproductive, and lessen the number of productive hands; at this moment engaged in a foreign war; taxation already carried to the ultimatum of financial device; the ability of the people already displayed in the payment of taxes, constituting a political phenomenon; all prove the debility of the system, and the decrepitude of old age. On the other hand, the United States, in the flower of youth; increasing in hands; increasing in wealth; and, although an imitative policy has unfortunately prevailed in the erection of a funded debt, in the establishment of an army, the anticipation of a navy,[1] and all the paper machinery for increasing the number of unproductive, and lessening the number of productive hands, yet the operation of natural causes has, as yet, in some degree, countervailed their influence, and still furnish a great superiority in comparison with Great Britain."

An attempt was made to liken the present situation of America to that in which she stood at the commencement of her revolutionary war; and the arguments drawn from the inconvenience to which a privation of British manufactures would expose the people at large were answered by observing—"This was not the language of America at the time of the non-importation associations; this was not her language at the time of the declaration of independence. Whence then this change of American sentiment? Has America less ability than she then had? Is she less prepared for a national trial than she then was? This can not be pretended. There is, it is true, one great change in her political situation. America has now a funded debt: she had no funded debt at those glorious epochs. May not this change of sentiment, therefore, be looked for in her change of situation in this respect? May it not be looked for in the imitative sympathetic organization of our funds with the British funds? May it not be looked for in the indiscriminate participation of citizens and foreigners in the emoluments of the funds? May it not be looked for in the wishes of some to assimilate the government of the United States to that of Great Britain? or at least, in wishes for a more intimate connexion?

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[1] Resolutions had been offered for the creation of a small navy to be employed in the Mediterranean.

"If these causes exist, it is not difficult to find the source of the national debility. It is not difficult to see that the interests of the few, who receive and disburse the public contributions, are more respected than the interest of the great majority of the society, who furnish the contributions. It is not difficult to see that the government, instead of legislating for a few millions, is legislating for a few thousands; and that the sacredness of their rights is the great obstacle to a great national exertion."

In addition to Mr. Smith, of South Carolina, the resolutions were opposed by Mr. Smith, of Maryland, Mr. Goodhue, Mr. Lea, Mr. Dexter, Mr. Ames, Mr. Dayton, Mr. Hartley, Mr. Tracy, Mr. Hillhouse, Mr. Forest, Mr. Fitzsimmons, and Mr. Foster.

If, it was said, the United States had sustained political wrongs from Great Britain, they should feel as keenly as any persons for the prostrated honour of their country; but this was not the mode of redressing them. When that subject should be brought before congress, they would not be slow in taking such measures as the actual state of things might require. But they did not approve of retaliating injuries under the cloak of commercial regulations. Independent of other objections, it would derogate from the dignity of the American character.

The resolutions, it was said, ought to be contemplated commercially; and the influence they would probably have on the United States, deliberately weighed. If they were adopted, it ought to be because they would promote the interests of America, not because they would benefit one foreign nation, and injure another. It was an old adage that there was no friendship in trade. Neither ought there to be any hatred. These maxims should not be forgotten in forming a judgment on the propositions before the committee. Their avowed objects were to favour the navigation and the manufactures of the United States, and their probable operation on these objects ought to be considered.

It had been said that the American tonnage ought to bear the same proportion to the foreign tonnage employed in her trade, as exists between the bulk of her exports and imports. But the correctness of this principle was not admitted. The fact was otherwise, and it was not believed to be an evil.

Great Britain carries for other nations from necessity. Her situation is calculated for navigation. Her country is fully peopled, so full that the ground is not sufficient to furnish bread for the whole. Instead, therefore, of ploughing the earth for subsistence, her subjects are obliged to plough the ocean. The defence of their coasts has been another cause which obliges them to abandon the more lucrative pursuits of agriculture, to provide for their defence. They have been compelled to sacrifice profit to safety.

The United States possessed a fertile, extensive, and unsettled country; and it might well be questioned how far their real interests would be promoted by forcing a further acceleration of the growth of their marine, by impelling their citizens from the cultivation of the soil to the navigation of the ocean. The measures already adopted had been very operative; and it was by no means certain that an additional stimulus would be advantageous. The increased duty on foreign tonnage, and on goods imported in foreign bottoms, had already been attended with sensible effects. In 1790, the American tonnage was one-half the whole tonnage employed in their trade: in 1791 it was three-fifths: in 1792, it had increased to two-thirds. This growth was believed to be sufficiently rapid. It was more rapid than the growth of British tonnage had ever been under the fostering care of their celebrated navigation act. Let the existing system be left to its natural operation, and it was believed that it would give to the United States that share in the carriage of their commodities, which it was their interest to take.

But if a different opinion prevailed, and it was conceived that additional encouragement ought to be given to navigation, then let the duty on all foreign bottoms be increased, and let the particular disabilities to which American vessels are subjected in any country, be precisely retaliated. The discriminations proposed, instead of increasing American navigation, were calculated to encourage the navigation of one foreign nation at the expense of another.

The United States did not yet possess shipping sufficient for the exportation of their produce. The residue must reach a market in foreign bottoms, or rot upon their hands. They were advancing to a different state of things; but, in the mean time, they ought to pursue their interest, and employ those vessels which would best answer their purpose. The attempt to make it their interest to employ the vessels of France rather than those of Britain, by discriminating duties which must enhance the price of freight, was a premium to the vessels of the favourite nation, paid by American agriculture.

The navigation act of Great Britain had been made a subject of heavy complaint. But that act was not particularly directed against the United States. It had been brought into operation while they were yet colonies, and was not more unfavourable to them than to others. To its regulations, Great Britain was strongly attached; and it was not probable that America could compel her to relinquish them. Calculations were made on the proportion of British manufactures consumed in America, from which it was inferred that her trade, though important, was not sufficiently important to force that nation to abandon a system which she considered as the basis of her grandeur. In the contest, considerable injury would be unquestionably sustained; and nothing was perceived in the situation of the United States, which should induce them to stand forth the champions of the whole commercial world, in order to compel the change of a system, in which all other nations had acquiesced. But if they were to engage in such a contest, it was by a similar act, by opposing disabilities to disabilities, that it ought to be carried on. Upon this point, several members who were opposed to the resolutions, avowed an opinion favourable to an American navigation act, and expressed their willingness to concur in framing regulations which meet the prohibitions imposed on their vessels with corresponding prohibitions. Thus far they were ready to go; but they were not ready to engage in a contest injurious to themselves, for the benefit of a foreign nation.

Another avowed object of the resolutions was to favour the manufactures of the United States. But certainly it was not by discriminating duties, by endeavouring to shift commerce from one channel to another, that American manufactures were to be promoted. This was to be done by pursuing the course already adopted, by laying protecting duties on selected articles, in the manufacture of which America had made some progress; and by a prohibitory duty on others, of which a sufficient domestic supply could be afforded. But the proposed measure only went to the imposition of a tax on their own citizens, for the benefit of a foreign nation.

If the British market afforded an assortment of goods best suited to their consumption, and could give them cheaper, a prohibitory duty imposed upon those goods would only drive their citizens to seek them in another market, less able to supply their wants, and at a dearer rate. There was nothing in this tending to encourage manufactures.

If the United States were prepared to manufacture to the whole amount of their wants, the importation of all rival articles might be prohibited. But this they were not prepared to do. Their manufactures must advance by slow degrees; and they were not to enter into a measure of this kind, for the purpose of retaliating on a nation which had not commercially injured them.

The resolutions then were adapted to the encouragement neither of the navigation, nor the manufactures of the United States, but of a foreign nation. Their effect would obviously be to force trade to change its natural course, by discriminations against a nation which had in no instance discriminated against the United States, but had favoured them in many points of real importance. By what commercial considerations could such a system be recommended?

That it would be attended with great immediate inconveniencies must be admitted; but for these, ample compensation, it had been said, was to be found in its remote advantages. These were, a diminution of American commerce with one nation, by its proportional augmentation with another; and a repeal of the navigation act, and of the colonial system of Great Britain.

On the subject of forcing trade from one nation to another, which is, of necessity, so complicated in principle, so various and invisible in consequence, the legislature should never act but with the utmost caution. They should constantly keep in view, that trade will seek its own markets, find its own level, and regulate itself much better than it could be regulated by law. Although the government might embarrass it, and injure their own citizens, and even foreign nations, for a while, it would eventually rise above all the regulations they could make. Merchants, if left to themselves, would always find the best markets. They would buy as cheap and sell as dear as possible. Why drive them from those markets into others which were less advantageous? If trade with Britain was less free, or less profitable, than with France, the employment of coercive means to force it into French channels would be unnecessary. It would voluntarily run in them. That violence must be used in order to change its course, demonstrated that it was in its natural course.

It was extraordinary to hear gentlemen complaining of British restrictions on American commerce, and at the same time stating her proportion of that commerce as a national grievance, and that the trade was so free as to become an injury. The very circumstance that she retained so large a share of it, was evidence that it did not experience in her ports unusual burdens. Whenever greater advantages were offered by other countries, there would be no need of legislative interference to induce the merchants to embrace them. That portion of trade would go to each country, for which the circumstances of each were calculated. If Great Britain purchased more American produce than she consumed, it was because, all circumstances considered, it was the interest of America to sell her more than she consumed. While this interest continued, no mischief could result from the fact; when the cause should cease, the effect would cease also, without the intervention of the legislature.

It was very improbable that the resolutions under consideration would effect their other avowed object, a repeal of the British navigation act.

The season, it was said, was peculiarly unfavourable to such experiments. The internal convulsions of France had laid her manufactures in ruins. She was not in a condition to supply her own wants, much less those of the United States. The superb column erected at Lyons could furnish no stimulus to the industry of her manufacturers.

But the attempt to stop the natural intercourse between the United States and Great Britain, though incapable of producing on the latter the full effect which was desired, might inflict deep and lasting wounds on the most essential interests of the former. The injuries which their agriculture would sustain from the measure, might be long and severely felt.

It had been proudly stated, that while America received articles which might be dispensed with, she furnished in return the absolute necessaries of life; she furnished bread, and raw materials for manufactures. "One would think," said Mr. Tracy, "to hear the declarations in this house, that all men were fed at the opening of our hand; and, if we shut that hand, the nations starve, and if we but shake the fist after it is shut, they die." And yet one great objection to the conduct of Britain was, her prohibitory duty on the importation of bread stuff while it was under a certain price.

Nothing could be more deceptive than the argument founded on the nature of American exports. What, it was asked, would be done with the surplus produce of the United States? Was it to remain in the country, and rot upon the hands of those who raised it? If not, if it was to be exported, it would find its way to the place of demand. Food would search out those who needed it; and the raw material would be carried to the manufacturer whose labour could give it value.

But there was a much more serious aspect in which this subject ought to be placed. The products of America grew in other soils than hers. The demands for them might be supplied by other countries. Indeed, in some instances, articles usually obtained from the United States would be excluded by a fair competition with the same articles furnished by other countries. The discriminations made in their favour enabled them to obtain a preference in the British market. By withholding those which were of the growth of the United States, Great Britain would not lose the article, but America would lose the market; and a formidable rival would be raised up, who would last much longer than the resolutions under consideration. It is easy by commercial regulations to do much mischief, and difficult to retrieve losses. It is impossible to foresee all evils which may arise out of such measures; and their effects may last after the cause is removed.

The opponents of the resolutions persisted to consider the credit given by British merchants, as a solid advantage to any country which, like the United States, was defective in commercial capital; but they denied that, from that source, any political influence had arisen. "If," said Mr. Tracy, "we may argue from a great state, Virginia, to the union, this is not true; for although that state owes immense debts, her representatives come forward with great spirit to bring Great Britain to her feet. The people to the eastward do not owe the English merchants, and are very generally opposed to these regulations. These facts must convince us that the credit given by Great Britain, does not operate to produce a fear, and a dependence, which can be alarming to government."

"If," said Mr. Dexter, "I have a predilection for any country besides my own, that bias is in favour of France, the place of my father's sepulture. No one, more than myself, laments the spasm of patriotism which convulses that nation, and hazards the cause of freedom; but I shall not suffer the torrent of love or hatred to sweep me from my post. I am sent neither to plead the cause of France nor England, but am delegated as a guardian of the rights and interests of America."

The speakers against the resolutions universally laboured to exclude from all weight in the decision on them, considerations which were foreign to the interests of the United States. "The discussion of this subject," said Mr. Tracy, "has assumed an appearance which must be surprising to a stranger, and painful in the extreme to ourselves. The supreme legislature of the

United States is seriously deliberating, not upon the welfare of our own citizens, but upon the relative circumstances of two European nations; and this deliberation has not for its object, the relative benefits of their markets to us, but which form of government is best and most like our own, which people feel the greatest affection for us, and what measures we can adopt which will best humble one and exalt the other.

"The primary motive of these resolutions, as acknowledged by their defenders, is, not the increase of our agriculture, manufactures, or navigation, but to humble Great Britain and build up France; and although it is said our manufactures and navigation may receive some advantage, it is only mentioned as a substitute in case of failure as to the great object.

"The discussion in favour of these resolutions has breathed nothing but hostility and revenge against the English; and yet *they* put on the mild garb of commercial regulations. Legislatures, always cautious of attempting to force trade from its own channels and habits, should certainly be peculiarly cautious, when they do undertake such business, to set about it with temperance and coolness; but in this debate, we are told of the inexecution of a former treaty, withholding western posts, insults and dominations of a haughty people, that through the agency of Great Britain the savages are upon us on one side, and the Algerines on the other. The mind is roused by a group of evils, and then called upon to consider a statement of duties on goods imported from foreign countries. If the subject is commercial, why not treat it commercially, and attend to it with coolness? if it is a question of political hostility, or of war, a firmer tone may be adopted."

On this side of the question, the conduct of Great Britain, if as hostile as it was represented to be, was spoken of with high indignation. "If," said Mr. Tracy, "these statements are founded in fact, I can not justify myself to my constituents, or my conscience, in saying the adoption of the regulations of commerce, a navigation act, or the whole parade of shutting ports, and freeing trade from its shackles, is in any degree calculated to meet or remedy the evil.

"Although I deprecate war as the worst of calamities for my country, yet I would inquire seriously whether we had on our part, fulfilled the treaty with Great Britain, and would do complete justice to them first. I would negotiate as long and as far as patience ought to go; and, if I found an obstinate denial of justice, I would then lay the hand of force upon the western posts, and would teach the world that the United States were no less prompt in commanding justice to be done them, than they had been patient and industrious in attempting to obtain it by fair and peaceable means. In this view of the subject I should be led to say, away with your milk and water regulations; they are too trifling to effect objects of such importance. Are the Algerines to be frightened with paper resolves, or the Indians to be subdued, or the western posts taken, by commercial regulations? when we consider the subject merely as a commercial one, it goes too far, and attempts too much; but when considered as a war establishment, it falls infinitely short of the mark and does too little."

This earnest and interesting debate was protracted to a great length, and was conducted on both sides with great spirit and eloquence. At length, on the third of February, the question was taken on the first resolution, which was carried by a majority of five. The further consideration of the resolutions was then postponed until the first Monday in March.

This animated debate was succeeded by another, on a question which also brought into full view, the systems that were embraced by the opposite parties, on some of those great national subjects which give a character and political complexion to an administration.

On the second of January, a resolution was agreed to in the house of representatives declaring "that a naval force adequate to the protection of the commerce of the United States against the Algerine corsairs, ought to be provided." The force proposed was to consist of six frigates: four of forty-four, and two of thirty-six guns.

This measure was founded on the communications of the President, representing the improbability of being able to negotiate a peace with the dey of Algiers; and on undoubted information that the corsairs of that regency had, during their first short cruise in the Atlantic, captured eleven American merchantmen, and made upwards of one hundred prisoners;

and were preparing to renew their attack on the unprotected vessels of the United States.

In every stage of its progress this bill was most strenuously opposed.

The measure was viewed simply as a present protection to commerce, and then as the commencement of a permanent naval establishment. In both characters it was reprobated with extreme severity.

As a measure of protection, it was declared to be altogether incompetent to the attainment of its object, because the force contemplated was insufficient, and because it could not be brought into immediate use. The measure, therefore, would be totally inefficacious.

But the object might be effected by other means, more eligible, and less expensive. By proper management, and a due attention to time and circumstances, a peace might be procured with money.

Nations possessing a naval force greatly superior to the proposed armament, had found it to their advantage to purchase the friendship of the Algerines. That mode of procuring peace was recommended both by its efficacy, and its economy. Unless the object was obtained, the money would not be expended.

Another mode of giving security to their commerce, preferable to the plan in the bill, was to purchase the protection of foreign powers. This might be acquired at a less expense than would be incurred in fitting out the proposed armament, and its utility would be immediate.

But the measure was also to be considered as the commencement of a permanent navy. The question which this view of it presented, was one of the most important that could engage the consideration of the house. The adoption of the principle would involve a complete dereliction of the policy of discharging the public debt. History afforded no instance of a nation which continued to increase its navy, and at the same time to decrease its debt.

To the expensiveness of the navy system were ascribed the oppressions under which the people of England groaned, the overthrow of the French monarchy, and the dangers which threatened that of Great Britain. The expensiveness of the government was the true ground of the oppression of the people. The king, the nobility, the priesthood, the *army,* and above all, the navy. All this machinery lessens the number of productive, and increases the number of unproductive hands in the nation.

The United States had already advanced full far enough in this system. In addition to the civil list, they had funded a debt on the principles of duration, had raised an army at an immense expense, and now a proposition was made for a navy.

The system of governing by debts, was the most refined system of tyranny. It seemed to be a contrivance devised by politicans to succeed the old system of feudal tenures. Both were tyrannical, but the objects of their tyranny were different. The one operated on the person, the other operates on the pockets of the individual. The feudal lord was satisfied with the acknowledgment of the tenant that he was a slave, and the rendition of a pepper corn as an evidence of it; the product of his labour was left for his own support. The system of debts affords no such indulgence. Its true policy is to devise objects of expense, and to draw the greatest possible sum from the people in the least visible mode. No device can facilitate the system of debts and expense so much as a navy; and they should hold the liberty of the American people at a lower rate, should this policy be adopted.

Another great objection to the establishment of a navy was, that until the United States should be able to contend with the great maritime powers on the ocean, it would be a hostage, to its full value, for their good behaviour. It would increase rather than lessen their dependence.

In reply, it was said that if it had been the intention of the house to incur a vast expense in the establishment of a navy for vain parade, there might be force in some of the objections which had been made. But this was not the case. It was a measure, not of choice, but of necessity. It was extorted by the pressure of unavoidable events.

It being universally admitted that their commerce required protection against the Algerine corsairs, the question was, simply, whether the plan proposed in the bill was the best mode of affording that protection.

To decide this question, it would be proper to consider the substitutes which had been offered; and then to review the objections which had been made to the measure.

The substitutes were, first, to purchase a peace; and 2ndly, to subsidize other nations to protect commerce.

On the first substitute, it was said that the late communications must satisfy every person who had attended to them, that all hope of purchasing a peace must be abandoned, unless there was a manifestation of some force which might give effect to negotiation. So long as the vessels of the United States remained an easy and tempting prey to the cupidity of those corsairs, it would be vain to expect that they would sell a peace for the price the government would be willing to give, or that a peace would be of any duration. If the executive had experienced such difficulties while the Algerine cruisers had captured only one or two vessels, and were confined to the Mediterranean by a Portuguese squadron, how much less prospect was there of success after they had captured a considerable number of ships, were likely to capture many more, and were at liberty to cruise on the Atlantic to the very coasts of the United States? Even that little prospect of success would be diminished, when the dey of Algiers should understand that the United States would take no measures to protect their trade, and were afraid of the expense of a small armament.

It was to be understood that they did not rely solely on the operations of the armament. They still looked forward to negotiation, and were willing to provide the means for purchasing a peace. But the former measure was necessary to give success to the latter, and the armament might be employed to advantage should negotiation fail.

The other substitute was to subsidize foreign powers. The national dishonour of depending upon others for that protection which the United States were able to afford themselves, was strongly urged. But there were additional objections to this project. Either the nations in contemplation were at peace or at war with the regency of Algiers. If the former, it was not to be expected that they would relinquish that peace for any indemnification the United States could make them. If the latter, they had sufficient inducements to check the depredations of their enemies without subsidies. Such a protection would be hazardous, as it would be, at any time, in the power of the nation that should be employed, to conclude a truce with Algiers, and leave the trade of the United States at the mercy of her corsairs. While the expense of protection was perpetually to be incurred, it would never furnish the strength which that expense ought to give.

With a navy of her own, America might co-operate to advantage with any power at war with Algiers, but it would be risking too much to depend altogether on any foreign nation.

To the argument that the force was incompetent to the object, it was answered, that, from the documents before them, and from the diligent inquiries of a large committee, the number and strength of the Algerine corsairs had been ascertained, and the armament contemplated in the bill was believed to be sufficient. If gentlemen thought differently, it was surprising that they did not move to augment it.

The expense of the frigates had been strongly urged. But the saving in insurance, in ships and cargoes, and in the ransom of seamen, was more than equivalent to this item. "But are not the slavery of our fellow citizens, and the national disgrace resulting from it, to be taken into the account? these are considerations beyond all calculation. Who can, after reading the affecting narratives of the unfortunate, sit down contented with cold calculations and syllogisms? their narratives ought to excite every possible exertion, not only to procure the release of the captured, but to prevent the increase of the number of these unhappy victims."

That a bill providing six frigates, to exist during the war with the Algerines, should excite apprehensions of a large permanent navy, and of an immense debt, was truly astonishing. But even if the bill had not contained a clause enabling the President to discontinue the armament provided peace should be concluded with the regency of Algiers, the weight of the objection was denied. America was peculiarly fitted for a navy; she abounded in all kinds of naval resources, and had within herself, those means which other nations were obliged to obtain from abroad. Her situation, and the dispositions of a considerable proportion of her citizens, evinced still more the propriety of a naval establishment. Perhaps the country was not yet mature for such an establishment to any great extent. But the period was not far distant when it would be. The United States had an increasing population, much individual wealth, and considerable national resources. It was not believed that the expense of equipping a small naval armament for the protection of their commerce, would be insupportable.

It was, however, matter of surprise, that gentlemen who had deemed the improvement of American navigation, as a source of defence, an object of so much importance as to be anxious to wage an immediate commercial war with Great Britain for that purpose, should avow such a fixed determination against resorting to that resource in any degree whatever, under circumstances the most urgent.

The original resolution was carried only by a majority of two voices; but as the bill advanced, several members who were accustomed to vote in the opposition gave it their support; and, on the final question, a majority of eleven appeared in its favour. The other branch of the legislature concurred, and it received the cordial assent of the President.

Pending these discussions, the irritations in which they commenced were greatly aggravated by accounts, that captures of American vessels by British cruisers were made to an extent altogether unprecedented; and early in March, an authentic paper was received which proved that those captures were not unauthorized.

On the sixth of November, 1793, additional instructions had been issued to the ships of war and privateers of Great Britain, requiring them to stop and detain all ships, laden with goods the produce of any colony belonging to France, or carrying provisions or other supplies to any such colony, and to bring the same, with their cargoes, to legal adjudication, in the British courts of admiralty.

These instructions made a serious impression on the most reflecting and moderate men in the United States. It was believed that they originated in a spirit of hostility which must lead to war; and that it had now become the part of prudence to prepare for that event.

On the 12th of March, Mr. Sedgewick moved several resolutions, the objects of which were to raise a military force, and to authorize the President to lay an embargo. The armament was to consist of fifteen thousand men, who should be brought into actual service in case of war with any European power, but not until war should break out. In the mean time, they were to receive pay while assembled for the purpose of discipline, which was not to exceed twenty-four days in each year.

After stating the motives which led to the introduction of these resolutions, they were laid on the table for the consideration of the members. Two days afterwards, a motion was made to take up that which related to an embargo; but this motion was negatived for the purpose of resuming the consideration of the commercial regulations which had been offered by Mr. Madison. On the motion of Mr. Nicholas, those resolutions were amended so as to subject the manufactures of Great Britain alone, instead of those of all nations having no commercial treaties with the United States, to the proposed augmentation of duties. They were again debated with great earnestness, but no decision on them was made.

In addition to the objections urged against them as forming a commercial system in time of peace, they were said to be particularly inapplicable to the present moment. If, as was believed, the United States were about to be forced into a war, the public counsels ought to be directed to measures of defence. In that event, the resolutions would, at best, be useless. But the greater the danger of war, the more incumbent was it on the government to unite public opinion in support of it; and this would best be effected by observing a line of conduct which would furnish no just cause of hostility. The commercial discriminations proposed were of a hostile and irritating nature, might render war certain, would be considered by many as unnecessary, and might impair that unanimity in which the great strength of the country consisted. It was submitted to the gentlemen to decide whether it was wise to press their system through, with so small a majority as was in its favour.

The resolutions were defended on the principle, that though not in themselves contributing to the national defence, they would not prevent the adoption of such other measures as the state of things might render necessary. If war should take place, they could do no harm. But war must at some time be succeeded by peace: and they would form a valuable basis for negotiation.[1]

On the 21st of March, Mr. Sedgewick's motion authorizing the President to lay an embargo was negatived by a majority of two voices; but in a few days, the consideration of that subject was resumed, and a resolution passed, prohibiting all trade from the United States to any foreign port or place for the space of thirty days, and empowering the President to carry the resolution into effect.

This resolution was accompanied with vigorous provisional measures for defence, respecting the adoption of which, no considerable division of sentiment was avowed.

While the measures of congress indicated the expectation of war, a public document made its appearance which seemed to demonstrate that Great Britain also was preparing for that event. This was the answer of Lord Dorchester, on the 10th of February, to a speech delivered by the deputies of a great number of Indian tribes assembled at Quebec. In this answer, his lordship had openly avowed the opinion, founded as he said on the conduct of the American people, that a war between Great Britain and the United States, during the present year, was probable, and that a new line between the two nations must then be drawn by the sword.

This document was not authentic; but it obtained general belief, and contributed to confirm the opinion that war was scarcely to be avoided.

On the 27th of March, Mr. Dayton moved a resolution for sequestering all debts due to British subjects, and for taking means to secure their payment into the treasury, as a fund out of which to indemnify the citizens of the United States for depredations committed on their commerce by British cruisers, in violation of the laws of nations.

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[1] In the course of this debate the resolutions were still considered as calculated to promote the interests, not of the United States, but of France. Mr. Ames said they had *French* stamped upon the very face of them. This expression produced a warm retort from Colonel Parker. He wished there was a stamp on the forehead of every person to designate whether he was for France or Britain. For himself he would not be silent and hear that nation abused to whom America was indebted for her rank as a nation. He was firmly persuaded that but for the aid of France in the last war, those gentlemen now on the floor who prided themselves in abusing her, would not have had an opportunity in that place of doing it. This sentiment produced a clap in the galleries. This indecorum was severely reprobated, and a motion was made to clear the galleries. Although the debate shows that the degree of sensibility excited by this disorder was extremely different in the different parties, it was justified by none, and the galleries were cleared.

The debate on this resolution was such as was to be expected from the irritable state of the public mind. The invectives against the British nation were uttered with peculiar vehemence, and were mingled with allusions to the exertions of the government for the preservation of neutrality, censuring strongly the system which had been pursued.

Before any question was taken on the proposition for sequestering British debts, and without a decision on those proposed by Mr. Madison, Mr. Clarke moved a resolution, which in some degree suspended the commercial regulations that had been so earnestly debated. This was to prohibit all intercourse with Great Britain until her government should make full compensation for all injuries done to the citizens of the United States by armed vessels, or by any person or persons acting under the authority of the British king; and until the western posts should be delivered up.[1]

On the fourth of April, before any decision was made on the several propositions which have been stated, the President laid before congress a letter just received from Mr. Pinckney, the minister of the United States at London, communicating additional instructions to the commanders of British armed ships, which were dated the eighth of January. These instructions revoked those of the sixth of November; and, instead of bringing in for adjudication all neutral vessels trading with the French islands, British cruisers were directed to bring in those only which were laden with cargoes the produce of the French islands, and were on a direct voyage from those islands to Europe.

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[1] A few days before the motions of Mr. Dayton and Mr. Clarke, a report was made by the secretary of state relative to the vexations of American commerce committed by the officers and cruisers of the belligerent powers. It was made from materials collected in an inquiry which had been instituted by the President before the meeting of congress. In this report, after detailing the numerous complaints which were made against Great Britain, the secretary proceeded to notice those which were brought against other nations. Against France, he said, it was urged that her privateers harassed the American trade no less than those of the British. That their courts of admiralty were guilty of equal oppression. That they had violated the treaty between the two nations. That a very detrimental embargo had detained a number of American vessels in her ports, and that the government had discharged a specie contract with assignats. The effect of this report seems to have been to excite a suspicion that the secretary of state was not sufficiently attached to liberty and to France.

The letter detailed a conversation with lord Grenville on this subject, in which his lordship explained the motives which had originally occasioned the order of the 6th of November, and gave to it a less extensive signification than it had received in the courts of vice admiralty.

It was intended he said to be temporary, and was calculated to answer two purposes. One was, to prevent the abuses which might take place in consequence of the whole of the St. Domingo fleet having gone to the United States; the other was, on account of the attack designed upon the French West India islands by the armament under Sir John Jarvis and Sir Charles Grey; but it was now no longer necessary to continue the regulations for those purposes. His lordship added, that the order of the sixth of November did not direct the confiscation of all vessels trading with the French islands, but only that they should be brought in for legal adjudication; and he conceived that no vessel would be condemned under it, which would not have been previously liable to the same sentence.

The influence of this communication on the party in the legislature which was denominated federal, was very considerable. Believing that the existing differences between the two nations still admitted of explanation and adjustment, they strenuously opposed all measures which were irritating in their tendency, or which might be construed into a dereliction of the neutral character they were desirous of maintaining; but they gave all their weight to those which, by putting the nation in a posture of defence, prepared it for war, should negotiation fail.

On the opposite party, no change of sentiment or of views appears to have been produced. Their system seems to have been matured, and not to have originated in the feelings of the moment. They adhered to it therefore with inflexible perseverance; but seemed not anxious to press an immediate determination of the propositions which had been made. These propositions were discussed with great animation; but, notwithstanding an ascertained majority in their favour, were permitted to remain undecided, as if their fate depended on some extrinsic circumstance.

Meanwhile, great exertions were made to increase the public agitation, and to stimulate the resentments which were felt against Great Britain. The artillery of the press was played with unceasing fury on the minority of the house of representatives; and the democratic societies brought their whole force into operation. Language will scarcely afford terms of greater outrage than were employed against those who sought to stem the torrent of public opinion, and to moderate the rage of the moment. They were denounced as a British faction, seeking to impose chains on their countrymen. Even the majority was declared to be but half roused; and to show little of that energy and decision which the crisis required.

Unequivocal evidence, it was said, had been obtained of the liberticide intentions of Great Britain; and only the successes of freedom against tyranny, the triumphs of their magnanimous French brethren over slaves, had been the means of once more guaranteeing the independence of this country. The glorious example of France ought to animate the American people to every exertion to raise their prostrate character; and every tie of gratitude and interest should lead them to cement their connexion with that great republic. The proclamation of neutrality, though admitted to have originated in the best motives on the part of the President, was declared to be not only questionable in a constitutional point of view, but eventually to have proved impolitic. Being falsely construed by Great Britain into a manifestation of a pusillanimous disposition, it served to explain the aggressions of that nation. Experience now urged the abandonment of a line of conduct, which had fed the pride and provoked the insults of their unprincipled and implacable enemy; and was derogatory to the honour, inconsistent with the interest, and hostile to the liberties of their country.

Their tameness under British aggressions was declared to furnish just cause of offence to France; since every infringement of right submitted to by a neutral, inflicted a correspondent injury on the nation at war with the offending power.

The proceedings of the legislature continued to manifest a fixed purpose to pursue the system which had been commenced; and the public sentiment seemed to accord with that system. That the nation was advancing rapidly to a state of war, was firmly believed by many intelligent men, who doubted the necessity, and denied the policy of abandoning the neutral position which had been thus long maintained. In addition to the extensive calamities which must, in any state of things, result to the United States from a rupture with a nation which was the mistress of the ocean, and which furnished the best market for the sale of their produce, and the purchase of manufactures of indispensable necessity, there were considerations belonging exclusively to the moment, which, though operating only in a narrow circle, were certainly entitled to great respect.

That war with Britain, during the continuance of the passionate and almost idolatrous devotion of a great majority of the people to the French republic, would throw America so completely into the arms of France as to leave her no longer mistress of her own conduct, was not the only fear which the temper of the day suggested. That the spirit which triumphed in that nation, and deluged it with the blood of its revolutionary champions, might cross the Atlantic, and desolate the hitherto safe and peaceful dwellings of the American people, was an apprehension not so entirely unsupported by appearances, as to be pronounced chimerical. With a blind infatuation, which treated reason as a criminal, immense numbers applauded a furious despotism, trampling on every right, and sporting with life, as the essence of liberty; and the few who conceived freedom to be a plant which did not flourish the better for being nourished with human blood, and who ventured to disapprove the ravages of the guillotine, were execrated as the tools of the coalesced despots, and as persons who, to weaken the affection of America for France, became the calumniators of that republic. Already had an imitative spirit, captivated with the splendour, but copying the errors of a great nation, reared up in every part of the continent self created corresponding societies, who, claiming to be the people, assumed a control over the government, and were loosening its bands. Already were the mountain,[1] and a revolutionary tribunal, favourite toasts; and already were principles familiarly proclaimed which, in France, had been the precursors of that tremendous and savage despotism, which, in the name of the people, and by the instrumentality of affiliated societies, had spread its terrific sway over that fine country, and had threatened to extirpate all that was wise and virtuous. That a great majority of those statesmen who conducted the opposition would deprecate such a result, furnished no security against it. When the physical force of a nation usurps the place of its wisdom, those who have produced such a state of things no longer control it.

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[1] A well known term designating the most violent party in France.

These apprehensions, whether well or ill founded, produced in those who felt them, an increased solicitude for the preservation of peace. Their aid was not requisite to confirm the judgment of the President on this interesting subject. Fixed in his purpose of maintaining the neutrality of the United States, until the aggressions of a foreign power should clearly render neutrality incompatible with honour; and conceiving, from the last advices received from England, that the differences between the two nations had not yet attained that point, he determined to make one decisive effort, which should either remove the ostensible causes of quarrel, or demonstrate the indisposition of Great Britain to remove them. This determination was executed by the nomination of an envoy extraordinary to his Britannic majesty, which was announced to the senate on the 16th of April in the following terms:

"The communications which I have made to you during your present session, from the despatches of our minister in London, contain a serious aspect of our affairs with Great Britain. But as peace ought to be pursued with unremitted zeal, before the last resource which has so often been the scourge of nations, and can not fail to check the advanced prosperity of the United States, is contemplated, I have thought proper to nominate, and do hereby nominate John Jay, as envoy extraordinary of the United States, to his Britannic majesty.

"My confidence in our minister plenipotentiary in London continues undiminished. But a mission like this, while it corresponds with the solemnity of the occasion, will announce to the world a solicitude for the friendly adjustment of our complaints, and a reluctance to hostility. Going immediately from the United States, such an envoy will carry with him a full knowledge of the existing temper and sensibility of our country; and will thus be taught to vindicate our rights with firmness, and to cultivate peace with sincerity."

To those who believed the interests of the nation to require a rupture with England, and a still closer connexion with France, nothing could be more unlooked for, or more unwelcome, than this decisive measure. That it would influence the proceedings of Congress could not be doubted; and that it would materially affect the public mind was probable. Evincing the opinion of the Executive that negotiation, not legislative hostility, was still the proper medium for accommodating differences with Great Britain, it threw on the legislature a great responsibility, if they should persist in a system calculated to defeat that negotiation. By showing to the people that their President did not yet believe war to be necessary, it turned the attention of many to peace; and, by suggesting the probability, rekindled the almost extinguished desire, of preserving that blessing.

Scarcely has any public act of the President drawn upon his administration a greater degree of censure than this. That such would be its effect, could not be doubted by a person who had observed the ardour with which opinions that it thwarted were embraced, or the extremity to which the passions and contests of the moment had carried all orders of men. But it is the province of real patriotism to consult the utility, more than the popularity of a measure; and to pursue the path of duty, although it may be rugged.

In the senate, the nomination was approved by a majority of ten voices; and, in the house of representatives, it was urged as an argument against persevering in the system which had been commenced. On the 18th of April, a motion for taking up the report of the committee of the whole house on the resolution for cutting off all commercial intercourse with Great Britain, was opposed, chiefly on the ground that, as an envoy had been nominated to the court of that country, no obstacle ought to be thrown in his way. The adoption of the resolution would be a bar to negotiation, because it used the language of menace, and manifested a partiality to one of the belligerents which was incompatible with neutrality. It was also an objection to the resolution that it prescribed the terms on which alone a treaty should be made, and was consequently an infringement of the right of the Executive to negotiate, and an indelicacy to that department.

In support of the motion, it was said, that the measure was strictly within the duty of the legislature, they having solely the right to regulate commerce. That, if there was any indelicacy in the clashing of the proceedings of the legislature and executive, it was to the latter, not to the former, that this indelicacy was to be imputed. The resolution which was the subject of debate had been several days depending in the house, before the nomination of an envoy extraordinary had been made. America having a right, as an independent nation, to regulate her own commerce, the resolution could not lead to war; on the contrary, it was the best means of bringing the negotiation to a happy issue.

The motion for taking up the report was carried in the affirmative. Some embarrassment was produced by an amendment offered by Mr. Smith of South Carolina, who proposed to add another condition to the restoration of intercourse between the two countries. This was, compensation for the negroes carried away in violation of the treaty of peace. The house avoided this proposition by modifying the resolutions so as to expunge all that part of it which prescribed the conditions on which the intercourse might be restored. A bill was brought in conforming to this resolution, and carried by a consideable majority. In the senate, it was lost by the casting vote of the Vice President. The system which had been taken up in the house of representatives was pressed no further.

The altercations between the executive and the minister of the French republic, had given birth to many questions which had been warmly agitated in the United States, and on which a great diversity of sentiment prevailed.

The opinion of the administration that the relations produced by existing treaties, and indeed by a state of peace independent of treaty, imposed certain obligations on the United States, an observance of which it was the duty of the executive to enforce, had been reprobated with extreme severity. It was contended, certainly by the most active, perhaps by the most numerous part of the community, not only that the treaties had been grossly misconstrued, but also that, under any construction of them, the interference of the executive acquired the sanction of legislative authority; that, until the legislature should interpose and annex certain punishments to infractions of neutrality, the natural right possessed by every individual to do any act not forbidden by express law, would furnish a secure protection against those prosecutions which a tyrannical executive might direct for the crime of disregarding its illegal mandates. The right of the President to call out the militia for the detention of privateers about to violate the rules he had established, was, in some instances denied; attempts to punish those who had engaged, within the United States, to carry on expeditions against foreign nations, were unsuccessful; and a grand jury had refused to find a bill of indictment against Mr. Duplaine, for having rescued, with an armed force, a vessel which had been taken into custody by an officer of justice. Of consequence, however decided the opinion of the executive might be with respect to its constitutional powers and duties, it was desirable to diminish the difficulties to be encountered in performing those duties, by obtaining the sanction of the legislature to the rules which had been established for the preservation of neutrality. The propriety of legislative provision for the case was suggested by the President at the commencement of the session, and a bill was brought into the senate, "in addition to the act for punishing certain crimes against the United States." This bill prohibited the exercise, within the American territory, of those various rights of sovereignty which had been claimed by Mr. Genet, and subjected any citizen of the United States who should be convicted of committing any of the offences therein enumerated, to fine and imprisonment. It also prohibited the condemnation and sale within the United States, of prizes made from the citizens or subjects of nations with whom they were at peace.

Necessary as this measure was, the whole strength of the opposition in the senate was exerted to defeat it. Motions to strike out the most essential clause were successively repeated, and each motion was negatived by the casting vote of the Vice President. It was only by his voice that the bill finally passed.[1]

In the house of representatives also, this bill encountered a serious opposition. The sections which prohibited the sale of prizes in the United States, and that which declared it to be a misdemeanour to accept a commission from a foreign power within the territory of the United States, to serve against a nation with whom they were at peace, were struck out; but that which respected the acceptance of commissions was afterwards reinstated.

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[1] Previous to taking the question on this bill, a petition had been received against Mr. Gallatin, a senator from the state of Pennsylvania, who was determined not to have been a citizen a sufficient time to qualify him under the constitution for a seat in the senate. This casual circumstance divided the senate, or the bill would probably have been lost.

In the course of the session, several other party questions were brought forward, which demonstrated, at the same time, the strength, and the zeal of the opposition. The subject of amending the constitution was revived; and a resolution was agreed to in both houses for altering that instrument, so far as to exempt states from the suits of individuals. While this resolution was before the senate, it was also proposed to render the officers of the bank, and the holders of stock, ineligible to either branch of the legislature; and this proposition, so far as respected officers in the bank, was negatived by a majority of only one vote.[1] A bill to sell the shares of the United States in the bank was negatived by the same majority.

In both houses inquiries were set on foot respecting the treasury department, which obviously originated in the hope of finding some foundation for censuring that officer, but which failed entirely. In a similar hope, as respected the minister of the United States at Paris, the senate passed a vote requesting the President to lay before that body, his correspondence with the French republic, and also with the department of state.[2]

The preparations for an eventual war, which the aspect of public affairs rendered it imprudent to omit, and a heavy appropriation of a million, which, under the title of foreign intercourse, was made for the purpose of purchasing peace from Algiers, and liberating the Americans who were in captivity, created demands upon the treasury which the ordinary revenues were insufficient to satisfy.

That the imposition of additional taxes had become indispensable, was a truth too obvious to be controverted with the semblance of reason; but the subjects of taxation afforded at all times an ample field for discussion.

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[1] A clause in the resolution as proposed, which was understood to imply that the act for incorporating the bank was unconstitutional, was previously struck out by the same majority.

[2] See note, No. XVI, at the end of the volume.

The committee of ways and means reported several resolutions for extending the internal duties to various objects which were supposed capable of bearing them, and also proposed an augmentation of the impost on foreign goods imported into the United States, and a direct tax. It was proposed to lay a tax on licenses to sell wines and spirituous liquors, on sales at auction, on pleasure carriages, on snuff manufactured, and on sugar refined in the United States, and also to lay a stamp duty.

The direct tax was not even supported by the committee. Only thirteen members voted in its favour. The augmentation of the duty on imports met with no opposition. The internal duties were introduced in separate bills, that each might encounter only those objections which could be made to itself; and that the loss of one might not involve the loss of others. The resolution in favour of stamps was rejected: the others were carried, after repeated and obstinate debates. The members of the opposition were in favour of raising the whole sum required by additional burdens on trade, and by direct taxes.

While these measures were depending before Congress, memorials and resolutions against them were presented by the manufacturers, which were expressed in terms of disrespect that evidenced the sense in which numbers understood the doctrine, *that the people were sovereign, and those who administered the government, their servants.* This opportunity for charging the government with tyranny and oppression, with partiality and injustice, was too favourable not to be embraced by the democratic societies, those self proclaimed watchful sentinels over the rights of the people. A person unacquainted with those motives which in the struggle of party, too often influence the conduct of men, would have supposed a direct tax to be not only in itself more eligible, but to be more acceptable to the community than those which were proposed. To the more judicious observers of the springs of human action, the reverse was known to be the fact.

The friends of the administration supported the proposed system against every objection to it, because they believed it to be more productive, and less unpopular, than a direct tax. It is not impossible that what recommended the system to one party, might constitute a real objection to it with those who believed that the public interest required a [1] change in the public councils.

On the ninth of June, this active and stormy session was closed by an adjournment to the first Monday in the succeeding November.

The public was not less agitated than the legislature had been, by those interesting questions which had occasioned some of the most animated and eloquent discussions that had ever taken place on the floor of the house of representatives. Mr. Madison's resolutions especially, continued to be the theme of general conversation; and, for a long time, divided parties throughout the United States. The struggle for public opinion was ardent; and each party supported its pretensions, not only with those arguments which each deemed conclusive, but also by those reciprocal criminations which, perhaps, each, in part, believed.

The opposition declared that the friends of the administration were an aristocratic and corrupt faction, who, from a desire to introduce monarchy, were hostile to France, and under the influence of Britain; that they sought every occasion to increase expense, to augment debt, to multiply the public burdens, to create armies and navies, and, by the instrumentality of all this machinery, to govern and enslave the people: that they were a paper nobility, whose extreme sensibility at every measure which threatened the funds, induced a tame submission to injuries and insults, which the interest and honour of the nation required them to resist.

The friends of the administration retorted, that the opposition was prepared to sacrifice the best interests of their country on the altar of the French revolution. That they were willing to go to war for French, not for American objects: that while they urged war they withheld the means of supporting it, in order the more effectually to humble and disgrace the government: that they were so blinded by their passion for France as to confound crimes with meritorious deeds, and to abolish the natural distinction between virtue and vice: that the principles which they propagated, and with which they sought to intoxicate the people, were, in practice, incompatible with the existence of government. That they were the apostles of anarchy, not of freedom; and were consequently not the friends of real and rational liberty.

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[1] The declaration was not unfrequently made that the people could only be roused to a proper attention to the violation of their rights, and to the prodigal waste of their money, by perceiving the weight of their taxes. This was concealed from them by the indirect, and would be disclosed to them by the direct, system of taxation.

CHAPTER X

THAT the most material of those legislative measures on which the two great parties of the United States were divided, might be presented in an unbroken view, some transactions have been passed over, which will now be noticed. 1794.

In that spirit of conciliation, which adopts the least irritating means for effecting its objects, the President had resolved to bear with the insults, the resistance, and the open defiance of Mr. Genet, until his appeal to the friendship, and the policy of the French republic should be fairly tried. Early in January, this resolution was shaken, by fresh proofs of the perseverance of that minister, in a line of conduct, not to be tolerated by a nation, which has not surrendered all pretensions to self government. Mr. Genet had meditated, and deliberately planned, two expeditions to be carried on from the territories of the United States, against the dominions of Spain; and had, as minister of the French republic, granted commissions to citizens of the United States, who were privately recruiting troops for the proposed service. The first was destined against the Floridas, and the second against Louisiana. The detail of the plans had been settled. The pay, rations, clothing, plunder, and division of the conquered lands to be allotted to the military; and the proportion of the acquisitions to be reserved to the republic of France, were arranged. The troops destined to act against the Floridas were to be raised in the three southern states, were to rendezvous in Georgia, were to be aided by a body of Indians, and were to co-operate with the French fleet, should one arrive on the coast. This scheme had been the subject of a correspondence between the executive and Mr. Genet, but was in full progress in the preceding December, when, by the vigilance of the legislature of South Carolina, it was more particularly developed, and some of the principal agents were arrested.

About the same time, intelligence less authentic, but wearing every circumstance of probability, was received, stating that the expedition against Louisiana, which was to be carried on down the Ohio from Kentucky, was in equal maturity.

This intelligence seemed to render a further forbearance incompatible with the dignity, perhaps with the safety of the United States. The question of superseding the diplomatic functions of Mr. Genet, and depriving him of the privileges attached to that character, was brought before the cabinet; and a message to congress was prepared, communicating these transactions, and avowing a determination to adopt that measure within *** days, unless, in the mean time, one or the other house should signify the opinion that it was not adviseable so to do. In this state, the business was arrested by receiving a letter from Mr. Morris, announcing, officially, the recall of this rash minister.

Mr. Fauchet, the successor of Mr. Genet, arrived in February, and brought with him strong assurances that his government totally disapproved the conduct of his predecessor. He avowed a determination to avoid whatever might be offensive to those to whom he was deputed, and a wish to carry into full effect the friendly dispositions of his nation towards the United States. For some time, his actions were in the spirit of these professions.

Not long after the arrival of Mr. Fauchet, the executive government of France requested the recall of Mr. Morris. With this request the president immediately complied; and Mr. Monroe, a senator from Virginia, who had embraced with ardour the cause of the French republic, and was particularly acceptable to the party in opposition, was appointed to succeed him.

The discontents which had been long fomented in the western country, had assumed a serious and alarming appearance.

A remonstrance to the President and congress of the United States from the inhabitants of Kentucky, respecting the navigation of the Mississippi, was laid before the executive, and each branch of the legislature. The style of this paper accorded well with the instructions under which it had been prepared.

In the language of an offended sovereign people, injured by the maladministration of public servants, it demanded the use of the Mississippi as a natural right which had been unjustly withheld; and charged the government, openly, with being under the influence of a local policy, which had prevented its making one single real effort for the security of a good which was all essential to the prosperity of the western people. Several intemperate aspersions upon the legislative and executive departments, accompanied with complaints that the course of the negotiations had not been communicated to those who were interested in the event, and with threats obviously pointing to dismemberment, were concluded with a declaration that nothing would remunerate the western people for the suspension of this great territorial right; that they must possess it; that the god of nature had given them the means of acquiring and enjoying it; and that to permit a sacrifice of it to any other considerations would be a crime against themselves and their posterity.

In the senate, the subject was referred to a committee, who reported, "that in the negotiation now carrying on at Madrid between the United States and Spain, the right of the former to the free navigation of the Mississippi is well asserted and demonstrated, and their claim to its enjoyment is pursued with all the assiduity and firmness which the magnitude of the subject demands; and will doubtless continue to be so pursued until the object shall be obtained, or adverse circumstances shall render the further progress of the negotiation impracticable. That in the present state of the business, it would be improper for congress to interfere. But in order to satisfy the citizens of the United States more immediately interested in the event of this negotiation, that the United States have uniformly asserted their right to the free use of the navigation of the river Mississippi, and have employed and will continue to pursue such measures as are best adapted to obtain the enjoyment of this important territorial right, the committee recommend that it be resolved by the senate—

"That the President of the United States be, and he hereby is requested to cause to be communicated to the executive of the state of Kentucky,[1] such part of the existing negotiation between the United States and Spain relative to this subject, as he may deem adviseable, and consistent with the course of the negotiation."

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[1] Two months previous to the passage of this resolution, the secretary of state had, by direction of the President, given the governor the most solemn assurances on this point.

In the house of representatives also, a resolution was passed, expressing the conviction of the house, that the executive was urging the claim of the United States to the navigation of the Mississippi, in the manner most likely to prove successful.

Had the measures pursued in the western country been dictated, exclusively, by a wish to obtain an important good, these resolutions would have allayed the ferment which had been excited. The effect which must be produced on Spain by the insinuation that the continuance of their connexion with the Atlantic states depended on obtaining the object they sought, was too apparent to escape the notice of men endowed with an ordinary share of intelligence. But when the real motives for human action are latent, it is vain to demonstrate the unreasonableness of those which are avowed.

After the reception of these resolutions, a number of the principal citizens from various parts of Kentucky assembled at Lexington, and among many intemperate resolutions passed the following:

"That the general government whose duty it was to put us in possession of this right (the navigation of the Mississippi) have, either through design or mistaken policy, adopted no effectual measures for its attainment.

"That even the measures they have adopted, have been uniformly concealed from us, and veiled in mysterious secrecy.

"That civil liberty is prostituted, when the servants of the people are suffered to tell their masters, that communications which they may judge important ought not to be intrusted to them."

These resolutions concluded with a recommendation of county meetings, of county committees of correspondence, and of a convention when it might be judged expedient, to deliberate on the proper steps for the attainment and security of their just rights.

To estimate these resolutions accurately, it will be necessary to view in connexion with them, the military preparations which were making in that country, under the authority of France.

In October 1793, it was alleged by the Spanish commissioners, that four Frenchmen had left Philadelphia, empowered by the minister of the French republic to prepare an expedition, in Kentucky, against New Orleans. This fact was immediately communicated by Mr. Jefferson to the governor of that state, with a request that he would use those means of prevention which the law enabled him to employ. Binding to good behaviour was particularly recommended. This letter was accompanied by one from the secretary of war, conveying the request of the President, that, if preventive means should fail, effectual military force should be employed to arrest the expedition; and General Wayne was ordered to hold a body of troops at the disposal of the governor, should he find the militia insufficient for his purpose.

The governor had already received information, that a citizen of Kentucky was in possession of a commission appointing him Commander-in-chief of the proposed expedition; and that the Frenchmen alluded to in the letter of Mr. Jefferson, had arrived, and, far from affecting concealment declared, that they only waited for money which they expected soon to receive, in order to commence their operations.

The following extract of a letter from the governor, on this subject, exhibits a curious specimen of the conclusions to which gentlemen were conducted by the course of political reasoning which prevailed at the day.

After stating the facts above alluded to, he says, "I have great doubts, even if they do attempt to carry their plan into execution, (provided they manage their business with prudence,) whether there is any legal authority to restrain or punish them, at least before they have actually accomplished it. For if it is lawful for any one citizen of this state to leave it, it is equally so for any number of them to do it. It is also lawful to carry with them any quantity of provisions, arms, and ammunition; and if the act is lawful in itself, there is nothing but the particular intention with which it is done that can possibly make it unlawful. But I know of no law which inflicts a punishment on intention only; or any criterion by which to decide what would be sufficient evidence of that intention, if it was a proper subject for legal censure.

"I shall, upon all occasions, be averse to the exercise of any power which I do not consider myself as clearly and explicitly invested with, much less would I assume power to exercise it against men whom I consider as friends and brethren, in favour of a man whom I view as an enemy and a tyrant. I shall also feel but little inclination to take an active part in punishing or restraining any of my fellow citizens for a supposed intrusion only, to gratify or remove the fears of the minister of a prince who openly withholds from us an invaluable right, and who secretly instigates against us a most savage and cruel enemy."

Upon the receipt of this extraordinary letter, the President directed General Wayne to establish a military post at fort Massac, on the Ohio, for the purpose of stopping by force, if peaceful means should fail, any body of armed men who should be proceeding down that river.

This precaution appears to have been necessary. The preparations for the expedition were, for some time, carried on with considerable activity; and there is reason to believe that it was not absolutely relinquished, until Spain ceased to be the enemy of France.[1]

The proceedings of the legislature of South Carolina embarrassed those who had planned the invasion of the Floridas, but did not entirely disconcert them. In April, a French sloop of war arrived on the confines of Georgia and East Florida, with a small body of troops, who were landed on one of the islands on the coast, south of the St. Mary, and who declared themselves to be part of a larger force, which might soon be expected. Upon their arrival, several small corps of Americans who had engaged to serve the republic of France, assembled in Georgia, for the purpose, as was universally understood, of co-operating with the French against the neighbouring dominions of Spain.

The interposition of government, and the inadequacy of the force to the object, disconcerted this expedition. Its leader conducted his followers into the Indian country, and endeavoured to make a settlement on their hunting grounds.

While these turbulent scenes were acting, the loud plaudits of

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[1] Intercepted letters were laid before the President, showing that this expedition had been communicated to some members of the national convention and approved. It was stated that Mr. Genet, with the rank of major general, was to be Commander-in-chief of all forces raised on the American continent, and to direct their movements.

France, which were dictated by a passionate devotion to that country, were re-echoed from every part of the American continent. The friendship of that republic for the United States, her respect for their rights, the ingratitude with which her continuing benefits were repaid, the injustice done her by the executive, its tameness under British insults, were the inexhaustible themes of loud, angry, and unceasing declamation. It required a firmness of mind, and a weight of character possessed only by the chief magistrate, to maintain the ground he had taken, against such an assemblage of passions and of prejudices.

It will be recollected that in the preceding year, the attempt to treat with the hostile Indians had suspended the operations of General Wayne until the season for action had nearly passed away. After the total failure of negotiation, the campaign was opened with as much vigour as a prudent attention to circumstances would permit.

The Indians had expected an attempt upon their villages, and had collected in full force, with the apparent determination of risking a battle in their defence. A battle was desired by the American general; but the consequences of another defeat, were too serious to warrant him in putting more to hazard by precipitate movements, than the circumstances of the war required. The negotiations with the Indians were not terminated till September, and it was then too late to complete the preparations which would enable General Wayne to enter their country and to hold it. He, therefore, contented himself with collecting his army and penetrating about six miles in advance of fort Jefferson into the uninhabited country, where he established himself for the winter, in a camp called Greensville. After fortifying his camp, he took possession of the ground on which the Americans had been defeated in 1791, where he erected fort Recovery. These positions afforded considerable protection to the frontiers, and facilitated the opening of the ensuing campaign.

Seeing only the dark side of every measure adopted by the government, and not disinclined to militia expeditions made at the expense of the United States, the people of Kentucky loudly charged the President with a total disregard of their safety, pronounced the continental troops entirely useless, declared that the Indians were to be kept in awe alone by militia, and insisted that the power should be deposited with some person in their state, to call them out at his discretion, at the charge of the United States.

Meanwhile, some steps were taken by the governor of Upper Canada which were well calculated to increase suspicions respecting the dispositions of Great Britain.

It was believed by the President, not without cause, that the cabinet of London was disposed to avail itself of the non-execution of that article of the treaty of peace, which stipulates for the payment of debts, to justify a permanent detention of the posts on the southern side of the great lakes, and to establish a new boundary line, whereby those lakes should be entirely comprehended in Upper Canada. Early in the spring, a detachment from the garrison of Detroit repossessed and fortified a position near fifty miles south of that station, on the Miamis of the lakes, a river which empties into lake Erie at its westernmost point.

This movement, the speech of lord Dorchester, and other facts which strengthened the belief that the hostile Indians were at least countenanced by the English, were the subjects of a correspondence between the secretary of state and Mr. Hammond, in which crimination was answered by recrimination, in which a considerable degree of mutual irritation was displayed, and in which each supported his charges against the nation of the other, much better than he defended his own. It did not, however, in any manner, affect the operations of the army.

The delays inseparable from the transportation of necessary supplies through an uninhabited country, infested by an active enemy peculiarly skilled in partisan war, unavoidably protracted the opening of the campaign until near midsummer. Meanwhile, several sharp skirmishes took place, in one of which a few white men were stated to be mingled with the Indians.

On the 8th of August, General Wayne reached the confluence of the Au Glaize and the Miamis of the lakes, where he threw up some works of defence, and protection for magazines. The

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[1] See note, No. XVII, at the end of the volume.

richest and most extensive settlements of the western Indians lay about this place.

The mouth of the Au Glaize is distant about thirty miles from the post occupied by the British on the Miamis of the lakes, in the vicinity of which the whole strength of the enemy, amounting, according to intelligence on which General Wayne relied, to rather less than two thousand men, was collected. The continental legion was not much inferior in number to the Indians; and a reinforcement of about eleven hundred mounted militia from Kentucky, commanded by General Scott, gave a decided superiority of strength to the army of Wayne. That the Indians had determined to give him battle was well understood; and the discipline of his legion, the ardour of all his troops, and the superiority of his numbers, authorized him confidently to expect a favourable issue. Yet, in pursuance of that policy by which the United States had been uniformly actuated, he determined to make one more effort for the attainment of peace without bloodshed. Messengers were despatched to the several hostile tribes who were assembled in his front, inviting them to appoint deputies to meet him on his march, in order to negotiate a lasting peace.

On the 15th of August, the American army advanced down the Miamis, with its right covered by that river; and on the 18th, arrived at the rapids. Here they halted on the 19th, in order to erect a temporary work for the protection of the baggage, and to reconnoitre the situation of the enemy.

The Indians were advantageously posted behind a thick wood, and behind the British fort.

At eight in the morning of the 20th, the American army advanced in columns: the legion with its right flank covered by the Miamis: One brigade of mounted volunteers commanded by General Todd was on the left; and the other under General Barbee was in the rear. A select battalion, commanded by Major Price, moved in front of the legion, sufficiently in advance to give timely notice for the troops to form in case of action.[1]

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[1] An evasive answer having been returned to the pacific overture made from the Au Glaize, General Wayne was uncertain whether the Indians had decided for peace or war.

After marching about five miles, Major Price received a heavy fire from a concealed enemy, and was compelled to retreat.

The Indians had chosen their ground with judgment. They had advanced into the thick wood in front of the British works which extends several miles west from the Miamis, and had taken a position, rendered almost inaccessible to horse by a quantity of fallen timber which appeared to have been blown up in a tornado. They were formed in three lines, within supporting distance of each other; and, as is their custom, with a very extended front. Their line stretched to the west, at right angles with the river, about two miles; and their immediate effort was to turn the left flank of the American army.

On the discharge of the first rifle, the legion was formed in two lines, and the front was ordered to advance with trailed arms, and rouse the enemy from his covert at the point of the bayonet; then, and not until then, to deliver a fire, and to press the fugitives too closely to allow them time to load after discharging their pieces. Soon perceiving the strength of the enemy in front, and that he was endeavouring to turn the American left, the general ordered the second line to support the first. The legion cavalry, led by Captain Campbell, was directed to penetrate between the Indians and the river, where the wood was less thick and entangled, in order to charge their left flank; and General Scott, at the head of the mounted volunteers, was directed to make a considerable circuit, and to turn their right flank.

These orders were executed with spirit and promptitude; but such was the impetuosity of the charge made by the first line of infantry, so entirely was the enemy broken by it, and so rapid was the pursuit, that only a small part of the second line and of the mounted volunteers could get into the action. In the course of one hour, the Indians were driven more than two miles, through thick woods; when the pursuit terminated within gun shot of the British fort.

General Wayne remained three days on the banks of the Miamis, in front of the field of battle, during which time the houses and cornfields above and below the fort, some of them within pistol shot of it, were reduced to ashes. During these operations, a correspondence took place between General Wayne and Major Campbell, the commandant of the fort, which is stated by the former in such a manner as to show, that hostilities between them were avoided only by the prudent acquiescence of the latter in this devastation of property within the-range of his guns.

On the 28th, the army returned to Au Glaize by easy marches, destroying on its route all the villages and corn within fifty miles of the river.

In this decisive battle, the loss of the Americans, in killed and wounded, amounted to one hundred and seven, including officers. Among the dead was Captain Campbell, who commanded the cavalry, and Lieutenant Towles of the infantry, both of whom fell in the first charge. General Wayne bestowed great and well merited praise on the courage and alacrity displayed by every part of the army.

The hostility of the Indians still continuing, their whole country was laid waste, and forts were erected in the heart of their settlements, to prevent their return.

This seasonable victory rescued the United States from a general war with all the Indians northwest of the Ohio. The Six Nations had discovered a restless uneasy temper; and the interposition of the President, to prevent a settlement which Pennsylvania was about to make at Presqueisle, seemed rather to suspend the commencement of hostilities, than to establish permanent pacific dispositions among those tribes. The battle of the 20th of August, however, had an immediate effect; and the clouds which had been long gathering in that quarter, were instantly dissipated.

In the south too, its influence was felt. In that quarter, the inhabitants of Georgia and the Indians seemed equally disposed to war. Scarcely was the feeble authority of the government competent to restrain the aggressions of the former, or the dread of its force sufficient to repress those of the latter. In this doubtful state of things, the effect of a victory could not be inconsiderable.

About this time, the seditious and violent resistance to the execution of the law imposing duties on spirits distilled within the United States, had advanced to a point in the counties of

Pennsylvania lying west of the Alleghany mountains, which required the decisive interposition of government.

Notwithstanding the multiplied outrages committed on the persons and property of the revenue officers, and of those who seemed willing to submit to the law, yet, in consequence of a steady adherence to the system of counteraction adopted by the Executive, it was visibly gaining ground, and several distillers in the disaffected country were induced to comply with its requisites. The opinion, that the persevering efforts of the administration would ultimately prevail, derived additional support from the passage of an act by the present congress, containing those provisions which had been suggested by the chief of the treasury department. The progress of this bill, which became a law on the fifth of June, could not have been unknown to the malcontents, nor could its probable operation have been misunderstood. They perceived that the certain loss of a market for the article, added to the penalties to which delinquents were liable, might gradually induce a compliance on the part of distillers, unless they could, by a systematic and organized opposition deprive the government of the means it employed for carrying the law into execution.

On the part of the Executive, this open defiance of the laws, and of the authority of the government, was believed imperiously to require, that the strength and efficacy of those laws should be tried. Against the perpetrators of some of the outrages which had been committed, bills of indictment had been found in a court of the United States, upon which process was directed to issue; and at the same time, process was also issued against a great number of non-complying distillers.

The marshal repaired in person to the country which was the scene of these disorders, for the purpose of serving the processes. On the 15th of July, while in the execution of his duty, he was beset on the road by a body of armed men, who fired on him, but fortunately did him no personal injury. At daybreak, the ensuing morning, a party attacked the house of General Nevil, the inspector; but he defended himself resolutely, and obliged the assailants to retreat.

Knowing well that this attack had been preconcerted, and apprehending that it would be repeated, he applied to the militia officers and magistrates of the county for protection. The answer was, that "owing to the too general combination of the people to oppose the revenue system, the laws could not be executed so as to afford him protection: that should the *posse comitatus* be ordered out to support the civil authority, they would favour the party of the rioters."

On the succeeding day, the insurgents re-assembled to the number of about five hundred, to renew their attack on the house of the inspector. That officer, finding that no protection could be afforded by the civil authority, had applied to the commanding officer at Fort Pitt, and had obtained a detachment of eleven men from that garrison, who were joined by Major Kirkpatrick. Successful resistance to so great a force being obviously impracticable, a parley took place, at which the assailants, after requiring that the[1] inspector and all his papers should be delivered up, demanded that the party in the house should march out and ground their arms. This being refused, the parley terminated, and the assault commenced. The action lasted until the assailants set fire to several adjacent buildings, the heat from which was so intense that the house could no longer be occupied. From this cause, and from the apprehension that the fire would soon be communicated to the main building, Major Kirkpatrick and his party surrendered themselves.

The marshal and Colonel Pressly Nevil were seized on their way to General Nevil's house, and detained until two the next morning. The marshal, especially, was treated with extreme rudeness. His life was frequently threatened, and was probably saved by the interposition of some leading individuals who possessed more humanity, or more prudence, than those with whom they were associated. He could obtain his liberty only by entering into a solemn engagement, which was guaranteed by Colonel Nevil, to serve no more process on the western side of the Alleghany mountains.

The marshal and inspector having both retired to Pittsburg, the insurgents deputed two of their body, one of whom was a justice of the peace, to demand that the former should surrender all his process, and that the latter should resign his office; threatening, in case of refusal, to attack the place, and seize their persons. These demands were not acceded to; but Pittsburg affording no security, these officers escaped from the danger which threatened them, by descending the Ohio; after which, they found their way by a circuitous route to the seat of government.

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[1] The inspector had left the house and secreted himself. The demand of the papers was acceded to.

The perpetrators of these treasonable practices, being desirous to ascertain their strength, and to discover any latent enemies who might remain unsuspected in the bosom of the disaffected country, despatched a party which stopped the mail from Pittsburg to Philadelphia, cut it open, and took out the letters which it contained. In some of these letters, a direct disapprobation of the violent measures which had been adopted was avowed; and in others, expressions were used which indicated unfriendly dispositions towards them. Upon acquiring this intelligence, delegates were deputed from the town of Washington to Pittsburg, where the writers of the offensive letters resided, to demand the banishment of the offenders. A prompt obedience to this demand was unavoidable; and the inhabitants of Pittsburg, who were convened on the occasion, engaged to attend a general meeting of the people, who were to assemble the next day in Braddock's field, in order to carry into effect such further measures as might be deemed adviseable with respect to the excise and its friends. They also determined to elect delegates to a convention which was to meet, on the 14th of August, at Parkinson's ferry. The avowed motives to these outrages were to compel the resignation of all officers engaged in the collection of the duties on distilled spirits; to withstand by force of arms the authority of the United States; and thereby to extort a repeal of the law imposing those duties, and an alteration in the conduct of government.

Affidavits attesting this serious state of things were laid before the President.

The opposition had now reached to a point which seemed to forbid the continuance of a temporizing system. The efforts at conciliation, which, for more than three years, the government had persisted to make, and the alterations repeatedly introduced into the act for the purpose of rendering it less exceptionable, instead of diminishing the arrogance of those who opposed their will to the sense of the nation, had drawn forth sentiments indicative of designs much deeper than the evasion of a single act. The execution of the laws had at length been resisted by open force, and a determination to persevere in these measures was unequivocally avowed. The alternative of subduing this resistance, or of submitting to it was presented to the government.

The act of congress which provided for calling forth the militia "to execute the laws of the union, suppress insurrections, and repel invasions," required as a pre-requisite to the exercise of this power, "that an associate justice, or the judge of the district, should certify that the laws of the United States were opposed, or their execution obstructed, by combinations too powerful to be suppressed by the ordinary course of judicial proceedings, or by the powers vested in the marshals." In the same act it was provided, "that if the militia of the state, where such combinations may happen, shall refuse, or be insufficient, to suppress the same, the President may employ the militia of other states."

The evidence which had been transmitted to the President was laid before one of the associate justices, who gave the certificate, which enabled the chief magistrate to employ the militia in aid of the civil power.

The executive being now authorized to adopt such measures as the crisis might require, the subject was again seriously considered in the cabinet; and the governor of Pennsylvania was also consulted respecting it. To avoid military coercion, if obedience to the laws could be produced by other means, was the universal wish; and therefore, all concurred in advising the appointment of commissioners from the governments of both the union, and the state, who should warn the deluded insurgents of the impending danger, and should convey a full pardon for past offences, upon the condition of future submission. But, respecting ulterior and eventful measures, a difference of opinion prevailed. The act already mentioned, made it the duty of the President, previous to the employment of military force, to issue his proclamation, commanding the insurgents to disperse within a limited time. The secretary of state (and the governor of Pennsylvania is understood to have concurred with him) was of opinion, that this conciliatory mission should be unaccompanied by any measure which might wear the appearance of coercion. He was alarmed at the strength of the insurgents, at their connexion with other parts of the country, at the extensiveness of the prevailing discontents with the administration, and at the difficulty and expense of bringing the militia into the field. The governor of Pennsylvania having declared his opinion, that the militia of that state, who could be drawn forth, would be incompetent to enforce obedience, the aid of the neighbouring states would consequently be necessary. The secretary of state feared that the militia of the neighbouring states would refuse to march; and that, should he be mistaken in this, their compliance with the orders of the executive might be not less fatal than their disobedience. The introduction of a foreign militia into Pennsylvania might greatly increase the discontents prevailing in that state. His apprehensions of a failure, in the attempt to restore tranquillity by coercive means, were extreme; and the tremendous consequences of a failure were strongly depicted. From the highly inflamed state of parties, he anticipated a civil war, which would pervade the whole union, and drench every part of it with the blood of American citizens.

The secretary of the treasury, the secretary of war, and the attorney general, were of opinion that the President was bound by the most high and solemn obligations to employ the force which the legislature had placed at his disposal, for the suppression of a criminal and unprovoked insurrection. The case contemplated by congress had clearly occurred; and the President was urged by considerations the most awful, to perform the duty imposed on him by the constitution, of providing "that the laws be faithfully executed." The long forbearance of government, and its patient endeavours to recall the deluded people to a sense of their duty and interest by appeals to their reason, had produced only increase of violence, and a more determined opposition. Perseverance in that system could only give a more extensive range to disaffection, and multiply the dangers resulting from it.

Those who were of opinion that the occasion demanded a full trial of the ability of the government to enforce obedience to the laws, were also of opinion, that policy and humanity equally dictated the employment of a force which would render resistance desperate. The insurgent country contained sixteen thousand men able to bear arms; and the computation was, that they could bring seven thousand into the field. If the army of the government should amount to twelve thousand men, it would present an imposing force which the insurgents would not venture to meet.

It was impossible that the President could hesitate to embrace the latter of these opinions. That a government entrusted to him should be trampled under foot by a lawless section of the union, which set at defiance the will of the nation, as expressed by its representatives, was an abasement to which neither his judgment nor his feelings could submit. He resolved, therefore, to issue the proclamation, which, by law, was to precede the employment of force.

On the same day, a requisition was made on the governors of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, for their several quotas of militia to compose an army of twelve thousand[1] men; who were to be immediately organized, and prepared to march at a minute's warning.

While steps were taking to bring this force into the field, a last essay was made to render its employment unnecessary. Three distinguished and popular citizens of Pennsylvania were deputed by the government to be the bearers of a general amnesty for past offences, on the sole condition of future obedience to the laws.

It having been deemed adviseable that the executive of the state should act in concert with that of the United States, Governor Mifflin also issued a proclamation, and appointed commissioners to act with those of the general government.

Meanwhile, the insurgents omitted nothing which might enlarge the circle of disaffection. Attempts were made to embark the adjacent counties of Virginia in their cause, and their violence was extended to Morgantown, at which place an inspector resided, who saved himself by flight, and protected his property by advertising on his own door that he had resigned his office. They also made similar excursions into the contiguous counties of Pennsylvania, lying east of the Alleghany mountains, where numbers were ready to join them. These deluded men, giving too much faith to the publications of democratic societies, and to the furious sentiments of general hostility to the administration, and particularly to the internal taxes, with which the papers in the opposition abounded, seem to have entertained the opinion, that the great body of the people were ready to take up arms against their government, and that the resistance commenced by them would spread throughout the union, and terminate in a revolution.

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[1] This requisition was afterwards augmented to fifteen thousand.

The convention at Parkinson's ferry had appointed a committee of safety consisting of sixty members, who chose fifteen of their body to confer with the commissioners of the United States, and of the state of Pennsylvania. This committee of conference was not empowered to conclude on any thing. They could only receive and report the propositions which might be made to them.

Men of property and intelligence, who had contributed to kindle the flame under the common error of being able to regulate its heat, now trembled at the extent of the conflagration. It had passed the limits they had assigned to it, and was no longer subject to their control.

The committee of conference expressed themselves unanimously in favour of accepting the terms offered by the government, and exerted themselves in the committee of safety to obtain a decision to the same effect. In that committee, the question whether they would submit peaceably to the execution of the law, retaining expressly the privilege of using all constitutional means to effect its repeal, was debated with great zeal. The less violent party carried it by a small majority; but, not thinking themselves authorized to decide for their constituents on so momentous a question, they afterwards resolved that it should be referred to the people.

This reference resulted in demonstrating that, though many were disposed to demean themselves peaceably, yet a vast mass of opposition remained, determined to obstruct the re-establishment of civil authority.

From some causes, among which was disaffection to the particular service, the prospect of bringing the quota of troops required from Pennsylvania into the field, was at first unpromising. But the assembly, which had been summoned by the governor to meet on the first of September, expressed in strong terms its abhorrence of this daring attempt to resist the laws, and to subvert the government of the country; and a degree of ardour and unanimity was displayed by the people of other states, which exceeded the hopes of the most sanguine friends of the administration. Some feeble attempts were indeed made to produce a disobedience to the requisition of the President, by declaring that the people would never be made the instruments of the secretary of the treasury to shed the blood of their fellow citizens; that the representatives of the people ought to be assembled before a civil war was commenced; and by avowing the extravagant opinion that the President could not lawfully call forth the militia of any other state, until actual experiment had ascertained the insufficiency of that of Pennsylvania. But these insidious suggestions were silenced by the general sense of the nation, which loudly and strongly proclaimed that the government and laws must be supported. The officers displayed an unexampled activity; and intelligence from every quarter gave full assurance that, with respect to both numbers and time, the requisitions of the President would be punctually observed.

The governor of Pennsylvania compensated for the defects in the militia law of that state by his personal exertions. From some inadvertence, as was said, on the part of the brigade inspectors, the militia could not be drafted, and consequently the quota of Pennsylvania could be completed only by volunteers. The governor, who was endowed with a high degree of popular elocution, made a circuit through the lower counties of the state, and publicly addressed the militia, at different places where he had caused them to be assembled, on the crisis in the affairs of their country. So successful were these animating exhortations, that Pennsylvania was not behind her sister states in furnishing the quota required from her.

On the 25th of September, the President issued a second proclamation, describing in terms of great energy the obstinate and perverse spirit with which the lenient propositions of the government had been received; and declaring his fixed determination, in obedience to the high and irresistible duty consigned to him by the constitution, "to take care that the laws be faithfully executed," to reduce the refractory to obedience.

The troops of New Jersey and Pennsylvania were directed to rendezvous at Bedford, and those of Maryland and Virginia at Cumberland, on the Potomac.[1] The command of the expedition had been conferred on Governor Lee of Virginia; and the governors of New Jersey and Pennsylvania commanded the militia of their respective states under him.

The President, in person, visited each division of the army; but, being confident that the force employed must look down all resistance, he left the secretary of the treasury to accompany it, and returned himself to Philadelphia, where the approaching session of Congress required his presence.

From Cumberland and Bedford, the army marched in two divisions into the country of the insurgents. The greatness of the force prevented the effusion of blood. The disaffected did not venture to assemble in arms. Several of the leaders who had refused to give assurances of future submission to the laws were seized, and some of them detained for legal prosecution.

But although no direct and open opposition was made, the spirit of insurrection was not subdued. A sour and malignant temper displayed itself, which indicated, but too plainly, that the disposition to resist had only sunk under the pressure of the great military force brought into the country, but would rise again should that force be withdrawn. It was, therefore, thought adviseable to station for the winter, a detachment to be commanded by Major General Morgan, in the centre of the disaffected country.

Thus, without shedding a drop of blood, did the prudent vigour of the executive terminate an insurrection, which, at one time, threatened to shake the government of the United

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[1] The spirit of disaffection was rapidly spreading, and had it not been checked by this vigorous exertion of the powers of the government, it would be difficult to say what might have been its extent. Even while the militia were assembling, it broke out in more than one county in Pennsylvania, and showed itself in a part of Maryland.

States to its foundation. That so perverse a spirit should have been excited in the bosom of prosperity, without the pressure of a single grievance, is among those political phenomena which occur not unfrequently in the course of human affairs, and which the statesman can never safely disregard. When real ills are felt, there is something positive and perceptible to which the judgment may be directed, the actual extent of which may be ascertained, and the cause of which may be discerned. But when the mind, inflamed by suppositious dangers, gives a full loose to the imagination, and fastens upon some object with which to disturb itself, the belief that the danger exists seems to become a matter of faith, with which reason combats in vain. Under a government emanating entirely from the people, and with an administration whose sole object was their happiness, the public mind was violently agitated with apprehensions of a powerful and secret combination against liberty, which was to discover itself by the total overthrow of the republican system. That those who were charged with these designs were as destitute of the means, as of the will to effect them, did not shake the firm belief of their existence. Disregarding the apparent partiality of the administration for France, so far as that partiality was compatible with an honest neutrality, the zealots of the day ascribed its incessant labours for the preservation of peace, to a temper hostile to the French republic; and, while themselves loudly imprecating the vengeance of heaven and earth on one of the belligerents, and openly rejoicing in the victories of the other; while impetuously rushing into a war with Britain, and pressing measures which would render accommodation impracticable; they attributed a system calculated to check them in this furious career, not to that genuine American spirit which produced it, but to an influence which, so far as opinions are to depend on facts, has at no time insinuated itself into the councils of the United States.

In popular governments, the resentments, the suspicions, and the disgusts, produced in the legislature by warm debate, and the chagrin of defeat; by the desire of gaining, or the fear of losing power; and which are created by personal views among the leaders of parties, will infallibly extend to the body of the nation. Not only will those causes of dissatisfaction be urged which really operate on the minds of intelligent men, but every instrument will be seized which can effect the purpose, and the passions will be inflamed by whatever may serve to irritate them. Among the multiplied evils generated by faction, it is perhaps not the least, that it has a tendency to abolish all distinction between virtue and vice; and to prostrate those barriers which the wise and good have erected for the protection of morals, and which are defended solely by opinion. The victory of the party becomes the great object; and, too often, all measures are deemed right or wrong, as they tend to promote or impede it. The attainment of the end is considered as the supreme good, and the detestable doctrine is adopted that the end will justify the means. The mind, habituated to the extenuation of acts of moral turpitude, becomes gradually contaminated, and loses that delicate sensibility which instinctively inspires horror for vice, and respect for virtue.

In the intemperate abuse which was cast on the principal measures of the government, and on those who supported them; in the violence with which the discontents of the opponents to those measures were expressed; and especially in the denunciations which were uttered against them by the democratic societies; the friends of the administration searched for the causes of that criminal attempt which had been made in the western parts of Pennsylvania, to oppose the will of the nation by force of arms. Had those misguided men believed that this opposition was to be confined within their own narrow limits, they could not have been so mad, or so weak as to have engaged in it.

The ideas of the President on this subject were freely given to several of his confidential friends. "The *real people*," he said, "occasionally assembled in order to express their sentiments on political subjects, ought never to be confounded with permanent self-appointed societies, usurping the right to control the constituted authorities, and to dictate to public opinion. While the former was entitled to respect, the latter was incompatible with all government, and must either sink into general disesteem, or finally overturn the established order of things."

In his speech, at the opening of congress, the President detailed at considerable length the progress of opposition to the laws, the means employed both by the legislature and executive to appease the discontents which had been fomented,[1] and the measures which he had finally taken to reduce the refractory to submission.

As Commander-in-chief of the militia when called into actual service, he had, he said, visited the places of general rendezvous, to obtain more correct information, and to direct a plan for ulterior movements. Had there been room for a persuasion that the laws were secure from obstruction, he should have caught with avidity at the opportunity of restoring the militia to their families and homes. But succeeding intelligence had tended to manifest the necessity of what had been done, it being now confessed by those who were not inclined to exaggerate the ill conduct of the insurgents, that their malevolence was not pointed merely to a particular law; but that a spirit inimical to all order had actuated many of the offenders.

After bestowing a high encomium on the alacrity and promptitude with which persons in every station had come forward to assert the dignity of the laws, thereby furnishing an additional proof that they understood the true principles of government and liberty, and felt their inseparable union; he added—

"To every description indeed of citizens, let praise be given. But let them persevere in their affectionate vigilance over that precious depository of American happiness,—the constitution of the United States. And when in the calm moments of reflection, they shall have retraced the origin and progress of the insurrection, let them determine whether it has not been fomented by combinations of men, who, careless of consequences, and disregarding the unerring truth that those who rouse can not always appease a civil convulsion, have disseminated, from an ignorance or perversion of facts, suspicions, jealousies, and accusations of the whole government."

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[1] The impression, he said, made by this moderation on the discontented, did not correspond with what it deserved. The acts of delusion were no longer confined to the efforts of designing individuals. The very forbearance to press prosecutions was misinterpreted into a fear of urging the execution of the laws, and associations of men began to denounce threats against the officers employed. From a belief that by a more formal concert their operations might be defeated, certain self-created societies assumed the tone of condemnation.

The President could not omit this fair occasion, once more to press on congress a subject which had always been near his heart. After mentioning the defectiveness of the existing system, he said—

"The devising and establishing of a well regulated militia, would be a genuine source of legislative honour, and a perfect title to public gratitude. I therefore entertain a hope that the present session will not pass without carrying to its full energy the power of organizing, arming, and disciplining the militia; and thus providing, in the language of the constitution, for calling them forth to execute the laws of the union, suppress insurrections, and repel invasions."

After mentioning the intelligence from the army under the command of General Wayne, and the state of Indian affairs, he again called the attention of the house of representatives to a subject scarcely less interesting than a system of defence against external and internal violence.

"The time," he said, "which has elapsed since the commencement of our fiscal measures, has developed our pecuniary resources, so as to open the way for a definitive plan for the redemption of the public debt. It is believed that the result is such as to encourage congress to consummate this work without delay. Nothing can more promote the permanent welfare of the union, and nothing would be more grateful to our constituents. Indeed, whatever is unfinished of our system of public credit, can not be benefited by procrastination; and, as far as may be practicable, we ought to place that credit on grounds which can not be disturbed, and to prevent that progressive accumulation of debt which must ultimately endanger all governments."

He referred to subsequent communications for certain circumstances attending the intercourse of the United States with foreign nations. "However," he added, "it may not be unseasonable to announce that my policy in our foreign transactions has been, to cultivate peace with all the world; to observe treaties with pure and inviolate faith; to check every deviation from the line of impartiality; to explain what may have been misapprehended; and correct what may have been injurious to any nation; and having thus acquired the right, to lose no time in acquiring the ability, to insist upon justice being done to ourselves."

In the senate, an answer was reported which contained the following clause:

"Our anxiety, arising from the licentious and open resistance to the laws in the western counties of Pennsylvania, has been increased by the proceedings of certain self-created societies relative to the laws and administration of the government; proceedings, in our apprehension, founded in political error, calculated, if not intended, to disorganize our government, and which, by inspiring delusive hopes of support, have been instrumental in misleading our fellow citizens in the scene of insurrection."

The address proceeded to express the most decided approbation of the conduct of the President in relation to the insurgents; and, after noticing the different parts of the speech, concluded with saying—

"At a period so momentous in the affairs of nations, the temperate, just, and firm policy that you have pursued in respect to foreign powers, has been eminently calculated to promote the great and essential interest of our country, and has created the fairest title to the public gratitude and thanks."

To this unequivocal approbation of the policy adopted by the executive with regard to foreign nations, no objections were made. The clause respecting democratic societies was seriously opposed; but the party in favour of the administration had been strengthened in the senate by recent events, and the address reported by the committee was agreed to without alteration.

The same spirit did not prevail in the house of representatives. In that branch of the legislature, the opposition party continued to be the most powerful, and the respect of their leaders for the person and character of the chief magistrate was visibly diminishing. His interference with a favourite system was not forgotten, and the mission of Mr. Jay still rankled in their bosoms.

The address prepared by the committee, to whom the speech was referred, omitted to notice those parts which respected self created societies, the victory of General Wayne, and the policy observed by the executive in its intercourse with foreign nations. On a motion being made by Mr. Dayton to amend it, by inserting a clause which should express the satisfaction of the house at the success of the army under General Wayne, Mr. Madison said, that it had been the wish of the committee who framed the address, to avoid the minutia of the speech: but as a desire was manifested to amplify particular parts, it might not be amiss to glance at the policy observed towards foreign nations. He therefore moved to amend the amendment by adding the words, "solicitous also as we are for the preservation of peace with all nations, we can not otherwise than warmly approve of *a* policy in our foreign transactions, which keeps in view as well the maintenance of our national rights, as the continuance of that blessing." Mr. Hillhouse wished the word *your* to be substituted for the article *a*, that the answer might point, not to an abstract policy, but to that of the executive, and thus have a direct application to the speech. This motion produced a warm discussion, which terminated in a request that Mr. Madison would withdraw his amendment; the friends of the administration being of opinion, that it was more eligible to pass over that part of the speech in silence, than to answer it in terms so equivocal as those to which alone the house seemed willing to assent.

A proposition was then made by Mr. Fitzsimmons to introduce into the address, a clause declaring, that "in tracing the origin and progress of the insurrection, they (the house of representatives) entertain no doubt that certain self created societies and combinations of men, careless of consequences, and disregarding truth, by disseminating suspicions, jealousies, and accusations of the government, have had an influence in fomenting this daring outrage against the principles of social order, and the authority of the laws."

This attempt to censure certain organized assemblages of factious individuals, who, under the imposing garb of watchfulness over liberty, concealed designs subversive of all those principles which preserve the order, the peace, and the happiness of society, was resisted by the whole force of the opposition. A very eloquent and animated debate ensued, which terminated in the committee, by striking out the words "self created societies;" forty-seven voting for, and forty-five against expunging them. The question was resumed in the house; and, the chairman of the committee being opposed in sentiment to the speaker, who was now placed in the chair, the majority was precisely changed, and the words were reinstated. This victory, however, if it may be termed one, was soon lost. A motion for confining the censure to societies and combinations within the four western counties of Pennsylvania and the adjacent country, succeeded by the casting vote of the speaker, upon which, the friends of the amendment gave it up, and the address was voted without expressing any sentiment on the subject.

This triumph over the administration revived, for a moment, the drooping energies of these pernicious societies. But it was only for a moment. The agency ascribed to them by the opinion of the public, as well as of the President, in producing an insurrection which was generally execrated, had essentially affected them; and while languishing under this wound, they received a deadly blow from a quarter whence hostility was least expected.

The remnant of the French convention, rendered desperate by the ferocious despotism of the jacobins, and of the sanguinary tyrant who had made himself their chief; perceiving that the number of victims who were immolated as his caprice might suggest, instead of satiating, could only stimulate his appetite for blood, had, at length, sought for safety by boldly confronting danger; and, succeeding in a desperate attempt to bring Robespierre to the guillotine, had terminated his reign of terror. The colossean power of the clubs, which had been abused to an excess that gives to faithful history the appearance of fiction, fell with that of their favourite member, and they sunk into long merited disgrace. The means by which their political influence had been maintained were wrested from them; and, in a short time, their meetings were prohibited. Not more certain is it that the boldest streams must disappear, if the fountains which fed them be emptied, than was the dissolution of the democratic societies of America, when the jacobin clubs were denounced by France. As if their destinies depended on the same thread, the political death of the former was the unerring signal for that of the latter, and their expiring struggles, incapable of deferring their fate, only attested the reluctance with which they surrendered their much abused power.

Notwithstanding the disagreement between the executive and one branch of the legislature concerning self created societies, and the policy observed towards foreign nations, the speech of the President was treated with marked respect; and the several subjects which it recommended, engaged the immediate attention of congress. A bill was passed authorizing the President to station a detachment of militia in the four western counties of Pennsylvania; provision was made to compensate those whose property had been destroyed by the insurgents, should those who had committed the injury be unable to repair it: and an appropriation exceeding one million one hundred thousand dollars was made to defray the expenses occasioned by the insurrection.

Many of the difficulties which had occurred in drawing out the militia were removed, and a bill was introduced to give greater energy to the militia system generally; but this subject possessed so many intrinsic difficulties, that the session passed away without effecting any thing respecting it.

A bill for the gradual redemption of the national debt was more successful. The President had repeatedly and earnestly recommended to the legislature the adoption of measures which might effect this favourite object; but, although that party which had been reproached with a desire to accumulate debt as a mean of subverting the republican system, had uniformly manifested a disposition to carry this recommendation into effect, their desire had hitherto been opposed by obstacles they were unable to surmount. Professions of an anxious solicitude to discharge the national engagements, without providing the means of actual payment, might gratify those who consider words as things, but would be justly estimated by men, who, neither condemning indiscriminately, nor approving blindly, all the measures of government, expect that, in point of fact, it shall be rightly and honestly administered. On the friends of the administration, therefore, it was incumbent to provide real, substantial funds, which should attest the sincerity of their professions. This provision could not be made without difficulty. The duty on imported articles, and on tonnage, though rapidly augmenting, could not, immediately, be rendered sufficiently productive to meet, alone, the various exigencies of the treasury, and yield a surplus for the secure establishment of a permanent fund to redeem the principal of the debt. Additional sources of revenue must therefore be explored, or the idea of reducing the debt be abandoned. New taxes are the never failing sources of discontent to those who pay them, and will ever furnish weapons against those who impose them, too operative not to be seized by their antagonists. In a government where popularity is power, it requires no small degree of patriotism to encounter the odium which, however urgently required, they seldom fail to excite. Ready faith is given to the declaration that they are unjust, tyrannical, and unnecessary; and no inconsiderable degree of firmness is requisite to persevere in a course attended with so much political hazard. The opposition made to the internal taxes, which commenced in congress, had extended itself through the community. Although only the act imposing duties on spirits distilled within the United States had been resisted by force, yet such a degree of irritation was manifested against the whole system, as to evince the repugnance with which a large portion of the people saw it go into operation. The duties on refined sugars, and manufactured tobacco, especially, were censured in terms which would authorize an opinion that a defect of power, rather than of will, to resist the execution of the law, confined some of its opponents to remonstrances. Nothing could be more unfriendly than this spirit, to the reduction of the debt.

The reports of the secretary of the treasury having suggested the several steps which had been taken by congress in the system of internal taxation, he was justly considered as its author. The perseverance which marked the character of this officer, gave full assurance that no clamour would deter him from continuing to recommend measures which he believed to be essential to the due administration of the finances. That the establishment of public credit on a sound basis was all important to the character and prosperity of the United States, constituted one of those political maxims to which he invariably adhered; and to effect it completely, seems to have been among the first objects of his ambition. He had bestowed upon this favourite subject the most attentive consideration; and while the legislature was engaged in the discussion of a report made by a select committee on a resolution moved by Mr. Smith, of South Carolina, purporting that further provision ought to be made for the reduction of the debt, addressed a letter to the house of representatives, through their speaker, informing them that he had digested and prepared a plan on the basis of the actual revenues, for the further support of public credit, which he was ready to communicate.

This comprehensive and valuable report presented the result of his laborious and useful investigations, on a subject equally intricate and interesting.

This was the last official act of Colonel Hamilton. The penurious provision made for those who filled the high executive departments in the American government, excluded from a long continuance in office all those whose fortunes were moderate, and whose professional talents placed a decent independence within their reach. While slandered as the accumulator of thousands by illicit means, Colonel Hamilton had wasted in the public service great part of the property acquired by his previous labours, and had found himself compelled to decide on retiring from his political station. The accusations brought against him in the last session of the second congress had postponed the execution of this design, until opportunity should be afforded for a more full investigation of his official conduct; but he informed the President that, on the close of the session, to meet in December, 1793, he should resign his situation in the administration. The events which accumulated about that time, and which were, he said in a letter to the President, of a nature to render the continuance of peace in a considerable degree precarious, deferred his meditated retreat. "I do not perceive," he added, "that I could voluntarily quit my post at such a juncture, consistently with considerations either of duty or character; and therefore, I find myself reluctantly obliged to defer the offer of my resignation.

"But if any circumstances should have taken place in consequence of the intimation of an intention to resign, or should otherwise exist, which serve to render my continuance in office in any degree inconvenient or ineligible, I beg leave to assure you, sir, that I should yield to them with all the readiness naturally inspired by an impatient desire to relinquish a situation, in which, even a momentary stay is opposed by the strongest personal and family reasons, and could only be produced by a sense of duty or reputation."

Assurances being given by the President, of the pleasure with which the intelligence, that he would continue at his post through the crisis, was received, he remained in office until the commencement of the ensuing year. On the 1st of December, immediately on his return from the western country, the dangers of domestic insurrection or foreign war having subsided, he gave notice that he should on the last day of January give in his resignation.

1795.

Seldom has any minister excited the opposite passions of love and hate in a higher degree than Colonel Hamilton. His talents were too preeminent not to receive from all the tribute of profound respect; and his integrity and honour as a man, not less than his official rectitude, though slandered at a distance, were admitted to be superior to reproach, by those enemies who knew him.

But with respect to his political principles and designs, the most contradictory opinions were entertained. While one party sincerely believed his object to be the preservation of the constitution of the United States in its original purity; the other, with perhaps equal sincerity, imputed to him the insidious intention of subverting it. While his friends were persuaded, that as a statesman, he viewed all foreign nations with an equal eye; his enemies could perceive in his conduct, only hostility to France, and attachment to her rival.

It was his fortune to hold a conspicuous station in times which were peculiarly tempestuous, and under circumstances peculiarly unfavourable to the fair action of the judgment. In the midst of prejudices against the national debt, which had taken deep root, and had long been nourished, he was called to the head of a department, whose duty it was to contend with those prejudices, and to offer a system which, in doing justice to the creditor of the public, might retrieve the reputation of his country. While the passions were inflamed by a stern contest between the advocates of a national, and of state governments, duties were assigned to him, in the execution of which there were frequent occasions to manifest his devotion to the former. When a raging fever, caught from that which was desolating France, and exhibiting some of its symptoms, had seized the public mind, and reached its understanding, it was unfavourable to his quiet, and perhaps to his fame, that he remained uninfected by the disease. He judged the French revolution without prejudice; and had the courage to predict that it could not terminate in a free and popular government.

Such opinions, at such a time, could not fail to draw a load of obloquy upon a man whose frankness gave them publicity, and whose boldness and decision of character insured them an able and steady support. The suspicions they were calculated to generate, derived great additional force from the political theories he was understood to hold. It was known that, in his judgment, the constitution of the United States was rather chargeable with imbecility, than censurable for its too great strength; and that the real sources of danger to American happiness and liberty, were to be found in its want of the means to effect the objects of its institution;—in its being exposed to the encroachments of the states,—not in the magnitude of its powers. Without attempting to conceal these opinions, he declared his perfect acquiescence in the decision of his country; his hope that the issue would be fortunate; and his firm determination, in whatever might depend upon his exertions, to give the experiment the fairest chance for success. No part of his political conduct has been perceived, which would inspire doubts of the sincerity of these declarations. His friends may appeal with confidence to his official acts, to all his public conduct, for the refutation of those charges which were made against him while at the head of the treasury department, and were continued, without interruption, till he ceased to be the object of jealousy.

In the esteem and good opinion of the President, to whom he was best known, Colonel Hamilton at all times maintained a high place. While balancing on the mission to England, and searching for a person to whom the interesting negotiation with that government should be confided, the mind of the chief magistrate was directed, among others, to this gentleman.[1] He carried with him out of office,[2] the same cordial esteem for his character, and respect for his talents, which had induced his appointment.

The vacant office of secretary of the treasury was filled by Mr. Wolcott, of Connecticut, a gentleman of sound judgment, who was well versed in its duties. He had served as comptroller for a considerable time, and in that situation, had been eminently useful to the head of the department.

The report of the select committee recommended additional objects for internal taxation, and that the temporary duties already imposed should be rendered permanent. The opposition made to this important part of the system was so ardent, and so persevering, that, though the measure was taken up early in the session, the bill did not pass the house of representatives until late in February. Not only were the taxes proposed by the friends of the administration encountered successively by popular objections, urged with all the vehemence of passion, and zeal of conviction, but it was with extreme difficulty that the duties on sugar refined, and tobacco manufactured, within the United States, could be rendered permanent. When gentlemen were urged to produce a substitute for the system they opposed, a direct tax was mentioned with approbation; but no disposition was shown to incur the responsibility of becoming the patrons of such a measure. At length, by the most persevering exertions of the federal party, the bill was carried through the house; and thus was that system adopted, which, if its operations shall not be disturbed, and if no great accumulations of debt be made, will in a few years, discharge all the engagements of the United States.

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[1] The apprehensions entertained by the opposition that Colonel Hamilton would be appointed on the embassy to England were extreme. Among the letters to General Washington, are some from members of each branch of the legislature, advising against the mission generally, and dissuading him from the appointment of Colonel Hamilton particularly, in terms which manifest a real opinion that the best interests of the nation would be sacrificed by such an appointment. Colonel Hamilton himself recommended Mr. Jay.

[2] See note, No. XVIII, at the end of the volume.

On the third of March, this important session was ended. Although the party hostile to the administration had obtained a small majority in one branch of the legislature, several circumstances had concurred to give great weight to the recommendations of the President. Among these may be reckoned the victory obtained by General Wayne, and the suppression of the western insurrection. In some points, however, which he had pressed with earnestness, his sentiments did not prevail. One of these was a bill introduced into the senate for preserving peace with the Indians, by protecting them from the intrusions and incursions of the whites.

From the commencement of his administration, the President had reviewed this subject with great interest, and had permitted scarcely a session of congress to pass away, without pressing it on the attention of the legislature. It had been mentioned in his speech at the commencement of the present session, and had been further enforced by a message accompanying a report made upon it by the secretary of war. The following humane sentiments, extracted from that report, are characteristic of the general views of the administration.

"It seems that our own experience would demonstrate the propriety of endeavouring to preserve a pacific conduct in preference to a hostile one with the Indian tribes. The United States can get nothing by an Indian war; but they risk men, money, and reputation. As we are more powerful and more enlightened than they are, there is a responsibility of national character that we should treat them with kindness, and even with liberality."

The plan suggested in this report was, to add to those arrangements respecting trade, which were indispensable to the preservation of peace, a chain of garrisoned posts within the territory of the Indians, provided their assent to the measure should be obtained; and to subject all those who should trespass on their lands to martial law. A bill founded on this report passed the senate, but was lost, in the house of representatives, by a small majority.

This report preceded the resignation of the secretary of war but a few days. This valuable officer, too, was driven from the service of the public, by the scantiness of the compensation allowed him.

On the 28th of December, 1794, he addressed a letter to the President giving him official notice that, with the year, his services as secretary for the department of war would cease. This resolution had long before been verbally communicated.

"After having served my country," concluded the letter, "near twenty years, the greater portion of the time under your immediate auspices, it is with extreme reluctance I find myself constrained to withdraw from so honourable a situation. But the natural and powerful claims of a numerous family will no longer permit me to neglect their essential interests.

"In whatever situation I shall be, I shall recollect your confidence and kindness with all the fervour and purity of affection, of which a grateful heart is susceptible."

In the letter accepting his resignation, the President expressed the regret it occasioned, and added:

"I can not suffer you, however, to close your public service, without uniting to the satisfaction which must arise in your own mind from conscious rectitude, assurances of my most perfect persuasion that you have deserved well of your country.

"My personal knowledge of your exertions, while it authorizes me to hold this language, justifies the sincere friendship which I have borne you, and which will accompany you in every situation of life."

Colonel Pickering, a gentleman who had filled many important offices through the war of the revolution; who had discharged several trusts of considerable confidence under the present government; and who at the time was postmaster general, was appointed to succeed him.

On the seventh of March, the treaty of amity, commerce, and navigation, between the United States and Great Britain, which had been signed by the ministers of the two nations, on the 19th of the preceding November, was received at the office of state.

From his arrival in London on the 15th of June, Mr. Jay had been assiduously and unremittingly employed on the arduous duties of his mission. By a deportment respectful, yet firm, mingling a decent deference for the government to which he was deputed, with a proper regard for the dignity of his own, this minister avoided those little asperities which frequently embarrass measures of great concern, and smoothed the way to the adoption of those which were suggested by the real interests of both nations. Many and intricate were the points to be discussed. On some of them an agreement was found to be impracticable; but, at length, a treaty was concluded, which Mr. Jay declared to be the best that was attainable, and which he believed it for the interests of the United States to accept.[1] Indeed it was scarcely possible to contemplate the evidences of extreme exasperation which were given in America, and the nature of the differences which subsisted between the two countries, without feeling a conviction that war was inevitable, should this attempt to adjust those differences prove unsuccessful.

On Monday the 8th of June, the senate, in conformity with the summons of the President, convened in the senate chamber, and the treaty, with the documents connected with it, were submitted to their consideration.

On the 24th of June, after a minute and laborious investigation, the senate, by precisely a constitutional majority, advised and consented to its conditional ratification.

An insuperable objection existed to an article regulating the intercourse with the British West Indies, founded on a fact which is understood to have been unknown to Mr. Jay. The intention of the contracting parties was to admit the direct intercourse between the United States and those islands, but not to permit the productions of the latter to be carried to Europe in the vessels of the former. To give effect to this intention, the exportation from the United States of those articles which were the principal productions of the islands was to be relinquished. Among these was cotton. This article, which a few years before was scarcely raised in sufficient quantity for domestic consumption, was becoming one of the richest staples of the southern states. The senate being informed of this fact, advised and consented that the treaty should be ratified on condition that an article be added thereto, suspending that part of the twelfth article which related to the intercourse with the West Indies.

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[1] In a private letter to the President, of the same date with the signature of the treaty, Mr. Jay said "to do more was impossible. I ought not to conceal from you, that the confidence reposed in your personal character was visible and useful throughout the negotiation.

"If there is not a good disposition in the far greater part of the cabinet and nation towards us, I am exceedingly mistaken. I do not mean an ostensible and temporizing, but a real good disposition.—I wish it may have a fair trial.

Although, in the mind of the President, several objections to the treaty had occurred, they were overbalanced by its advantages; and before transmitting it to the senate, he had resolved to ratify it, if approved by that body. The resolution of the senate presented difficulties which required consideration. Whether they could advise and consent to an article which had not been laid before them; and whether their resolution was to be considered as the final exercise of their power, were questions not entirely free from difficulty. Nor was it absolutely clear that the executive could ratify the treaty, under the advice of the senate, until the suspending article should be introduced into it. A few days were employed in the removal of these doubts, at the expiration of which, intelligence was received from Europe which suspended the resolution which the President had formed.

The English papers contained an account, which, though not official, was deemed worthy of credit, that the order of the 8th of June, 1793, for the seizure of provisions going to French ports, was renewed. In the apprehension that this order might be construed and intended as a practical construction of that article in the treaty which seemed to favour the idea that provisions, though not generally contraband, might occasionally become so, a construction in which he had determined not to acquiesce, the President thought it wise to reconsider his decision. Of the result of this reconsideration, there is no conclusive testimony. A strong memorial against this objectionable order was directed; and the propositions to withhold the ratification of the treaty until the order should be repealed; to make the exchange of ratifications dependent upon that event; and to adhere to his original purpose of pursuing the advice of the senate, connecting with that measure the memorial which had been mentioned, as an act explanatory of the sense in which his ratification was made, were severally reviewed by him. In conformity with his practice of withholding his opinion on controverted points until it should become necessary to decide them, he suspended his determination on these propositions until the memorial should be prepared and laid before him. In the meantime, his private affairs required that he should visit Mount Vernon.

So restless and uneasy was the temper respecting foreign nations, that no surprise ought to be excited at the anxiety which was felt on the negotiation of a treaty with Great Britain, nor at the means which were used, before its contents were known, to extend the prejudices against it.

Great umbrage was taken at the mysterious secrecy in which the negotiation had been involved. That the instrument itself was not immediately communicated to the public, and that the senate deliberated upon it with closed doors, were considered as additional evidences of the contempt in which their rulers held the feelings and understandings of the people, and of the monarchical tendencies of the government. Crowned heads, it was loudly repeated, who were machinating designs subversive of the rights of man, and the happiness of nations, might well cover with an impenetrable veil, their dark transactions; but republics ought to have no secrets. In republics, those to whom power was delegated, being the servants of the people, acting solely for their benefit, ought to transact all national affairs in open day. This doctrine was not too absurd for the extravagance of the moment.

The predetermined hostility to the treaty increased in activity, as the period for deciding its fate approached. On its particular merits, no opinion could be formed, because they were unknown; but on the general question of reconciliation between the two countries, a decisive judgment was extensively made up. The sentiments called forth by the occasion demonstrated, that no possible adjustment of differences with Great Britain, no possible arrangement which might promise a future friendly intercourse with that nation, could be satisfactory. The President was openly attacked; his whole system strongly condemned; and the mission of Mr. Jay, particularly, was reprobated in terms of peculiar harshness. That a treaty of amity and commerce should have been formed, whatever might be its principles, was a degrading insult to the American people; a pusillanimous surrender of their honour; and an insidious injury to France. Between such a compact, and an alliance, no distinction was taken. It was an abandonment of the ancient ally of the United States, whose friendship had given them independence, and whose splendid victories still protected them, for a close connexion with her natural enemy, and with the enemy of human liberty.

The pretended object of the mission, it was said, was a reparation for wrongs, not a contaminating connexion with the most faithless and corrupt court in the world. The return of the envoy without that reparation, was a virtual surrender of the claim. The honour of the United States required a peremptory demand of the immediate surrender of the western posts, and of compensation for the piratical depredations committed on their commerce; not a disgraceful and humiliating negotiation. The surrender, and the compensation, ought to have been made instantly; for no reliance could be placed in promises to be performed in future.

That the disinclination formerly manifested by Great Britain, to give the stability and certainty of compact to the principles regulating the commercial intercourse between the two countries, had constituted an important item in the catalogue of complaints against that power: that the existence, or non-existence of commercial treaties had been selected as the criterion by which to regulate the discriminations proposed to be made in the trade of foreign nations; that, in the discussion on this subject, the favourers of commercial hostility had uniformly supported the policy of giving value to treaties with the United States; these opinions were instantly relinquished by the party which had strenuously asserted them while urged by their leaders in congress; and it was imputed as a crime to the government, and to its negotiator, that he had proceeded further than to demand immediate and unconditional reparation of the wrongs sustained by the United States.

The most strenuous and unremitting exertions to give increased energy to the love which was openly avowed for France, and to the detestation which was not less openly avowed for England,[1] were connected with this course of passionate declamation.

Such was the state of parties when the senate advised the ratification of the treaty. Although common usage, and a decent respect for the executive, and for a foreign nation, not less than a positive resolution, required that the seal of secrecy should not be broken by the senate, an abstract of this instrument, not very faithfully taken, was given to the public; and on the 29th of June, a senator of the United States transmitted a copy of it to the most distinguished editor of the opposition party in Philadelphia, to be communicated to the public through the medium of the press.

If the negotiation itself had been acrimoniously censured; if amicable arrangements, whatever might be their character, had been passionately condemned; it was not to be expected that the treaty would assuage these pre-existing irritations.

In fact, public opinion did receive a considerable shock, and men uninfected by the spirit of faction felt some disappointment on its first appearance. In national contests, unless there be an undue attachment to the adversary country, few men, even among the intelligent, are sensible of the weakness which may exist in their own pretensions, or can allow their full force to the claims of the other party. If the people at large enter keenly into the points of controversy with a foreign power, they can never be satisfied with any equal adjustment of those points, unless other considerations, stronger than abstract reason, afford that satisfaction; nor will it ever be difficult to prove to them, in a case unassisted by the passions, that in any practicable commercial contract, they give too much, and receive too little.

On no subject whatever have considerations, such as these, possessed more influence than in that which was now brought before the American people. Their operation was not confined to those whose passions urged them to take part in the war, nor to the open enemies of the executive. The friends of peace, and of the administration, had generally received impressions unfavourable to the fair exercise of judgment in the case, which it required time and reflection to efface. Even among them, strong prejudices had been imbibed in favour of France, which the open attempts on the sovereignty of the United States had only weakened; and the matters of controversy with Great Britain had been contemplated with all that partiality which men generally feel for their own interests. With respect to commerce also, strong opinions had been preconceived. The desire to gain admission into the British West India islands, especially, had excited great hostility to that colonial system which had been adopted by every country in Europe; and sufficient allowances were not made for the prejudices by which that system was supported.

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[1] See note, No. XIX, at the end of the volume.

The treaty, therefore, when exposed to the public view, found one party prepared for a bold and intrepid attack, but the other, not ready in its defence. An appeal to the passions, the prejudices, and the feelings of the nation, might confidently be made by those whose only object was its condemnation; while reflection, information, and consequently time, were required by men whose first impressions were not in its favour, but who were not inclined to yield absolutely to those impressions.

That a treaty involving a great variety of complicated national interests, and adjusting differences of long standing, which had excited strong reciprocal prejudices, would require a patient and laborious investigation, both of the instrument itself, and of the circumstances under which it was negotiated, before even those who are most conversant in diplomatic transactions could form a just estimate of its merits, would be conceded by all reflecting men. But an immense party in America, not in the habit of considering national compacts, without examining the circumstances under which that with Great Britain had been formed, or weighing the reasons which induced it; without understanding the instrument, and in many instances without reading it, rushed impetuously to its condemnation; and, confident that public opinion would be surprised by the suddenness, or stormed by the fury of the assault, expected that the President would be compelled to yield to its violence.

In the populous cities, meetings of the people were immediately summoned, in order to take into their consideration, and to express their opinions respecting an instrument, to comprehend the full extent of which, a statesman would need deep reflection in the quiet of his closet, aided by considerable inquiry. It may well be supposed that persons feeling some distrust of their capacity to form, intuitively, a correct judgment on a subject so complex, and disposed only to act knowingly, would be unwilling to make so hasty a decision, and consequently be disinclined to attend such meetings. Many intelligent men, therefore, stood aloof, while the most intemperate assumed, as usual, the name of the people; pronounced a definitive and unqualified condemnation of every article in the treaty; and, with the utmost confidence, assigned reasons for their opinions, which, in many instances, had only an imaginary existence; and in some, were obviously founded on the strong prejudices which were entertained with respect to foreign powers. It is difficult to review the various resolutions and addresses to which the occasion gave birth, without feeling some degree of astonishment, mingled with humiliation, at perceiving such proofs of the deplorable fallibility of human reason.

The first meeting was held in Boston. The example of that city was soon followed by New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Charleston; and, as if their addresses were designed at least as much for their fellow citizens as for their President, while one copy was transmitted to him, another was committed to the press. The precedent set by these large cities was followed, with wonderful rapidity, throughout the union; and the spirit in which this system of opposition originated sustained no diminution of violence in its progress.

On the 18th of July, at Baltimore, on his way to Mount Vernon, the President received the resolutions passed by the meeting at Boston, which were enclosed to him in a letter from the select men of that town. The answer to this letter and to these resolutions evinced the firmness with which he had resolved to meet the effort that was obviously making, to control the exercise of his constitutional functions, by giving a promptness and vigour to the expression of the sentiments of a party, which might impose it upon the world as the deliberate judgment of the public.

Addresses to the chief magistrate, and resolutions of town and country meetings, were not the only means which were employed to enlist the American people against the measure which had been advised by the senate. In an immense number of essays, the treaty was critically examined, and every argument which might operate on the judgment or prejudice of the public, was urged in the warm and glowing language of passion. To meet these efforts by counter efforts, was deemed indispensably necessary by the friends of that instrument; and the gazettes of the day are replete with appeals to the passions, and to the reason, of those who are the ultimate arbiters of every political question. That the treaty affected the interests of France not less than those of the United States, was, in this memorable controversy, asserted by the one party, with as much zeal as it was denied by the other. These agitations furnished matter to the President for deep reflection, and for serious regret; but they appear not to have shaken the decision he had formed, or to have affected his conduct otherwise than to induce a still greater degree of circumspection in the mode of transacting the delicate business before him. On their first appearance, therefore, he resolved to hasten his return to Philadelphia, for the purpose of considering, at that place rather than at Mount Vernon, the memorial against the provision order, and the conditional ratification of the treaty. In a private letter to the secretary of state, of the 29th of July, accompanying the official communication of this determination, he stated more at large the motives which induced it. These were, the violent and extraordinary proceedings which were taking place, and might be expected, throughout the union; and his opinion that the memorial, the ratification, and the instructions which were framing, were of such vast magnitude as not only to require great individual consideration, but a solemn conjunct revision.

He viewed the opposition which the treaty was receiving from the meetings in different parts of the union, in a very serious light;—not because there was more weight in any of the objections than was foreseen at first,—for in some of them there was none, and in others, there were gross misrepresentations; nor as it respected himself personally, for that he declared should have no influence on his conduct. He plainly perceived, and was accordingly preparing his mind for, the obloquy which disappointment and malice were collecting to heap upon him. But he was alarmed on account of the effect it might have on France, and the advantage which the government of that country might be disposed to make of the spirit which was at work, to cherish a belief, that the treaty was calculated to favour Great Britain at her expense. Whether she believed or disbelieved these tales, their effect, he said, would be nearly the same.

"To sum up the whole," he added, "in a few words, I have never, since I have been in the administration of the government, seen a crisis which, in my opinion, has been so pregnant with interesting events, nor one from which more is to be apprehended, whether viewed on one side or the other. From New York there is, and I am told will further be, a counter current;[1] but how formidable it may appear I know not. If the same does not take place at Boston and other towns, it will afford but too strong evidence that the opposition is in a manner universal, and would make the ratification a very serious business indeed. But as it respects the French, even counter resolutions would, for the reasons I have already mentioned, do little more than weaken, in a small degree, the effect the other side would have."

In a private letter of the 31st of July to the same gentleman, after repeating his determination to return to Philadelphia, and his impression of the wisdom, the temperateness, and the firmness for which the crisis most eminently called; he added, "for there is too much reason to believe, from the pains that have been taken before, at, and since the advice of the senate respecting the treaty, that the prejudices against it are more extensive than is generally imagined. How should it be otherwise? when no stone has been left unturned that could impress on the minds of the people the most arrant misrepresentation of facts: that their rights have not only been neglected, but absolutely sold: that there are no reciprocal advantages in the treaty: that the benefits are all on the side of Great Britain: and, what seems to have had more weight with them than all the rest, and has been most pressed, that the treaty is made with the design to oppress the French republic, in open violation of our treaty with that nation, and contrary too to every principle of gratitude and sound policy. In time, when passion shall have yielded to sober reason, the current may possibly turn; but, in the mean while, this government, in relation to France and England, may be compared to a ship between Scylla and Charybdis. If the treaty is ratified, the partisans of the French (or rather of war and confusion) will excite them to hostile measures, or at least to unfriendly sentiments;—if it is not, there is no foreseeing all the consequences that may follow as it respects Great Britain.

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[1] The chamber of commerce in New York had voted resolutions expressing their approbation of the treaty.

"It is not to be inferred from hence that I am or shall be disposed to quit the ground I have taken, unless circumstances more imperious than have yet come to my knowledge, should compel it; for there is but one straight course, and that is to seek truth, and to pursue it steadily. But these things are mentioned to show that a close investigation of the subject is more than ever necessary; and that there are strong evidences of the necessity of the most circumspect conduct in carrying the determination of government into effect, with prudence as it respects our own people, and with every exertion to produce a change for the better with Great Britain."

In a letter of the third of August, written to the same gentleman, in which he stated the increasing extent of hostility to the treaty, the President added:

"All these things do not shake my determination with respect to the proposed ratification, nor will they, unless something more imperious and unknown to me, should, in the opinion of yourself and the gentlemen with you, make it adviseable for me to pause."

In the afternoon of the 11th of August the President arrived in Philadelphia; and on the next day, the question respecting the immediate ratification of the treaty was brought before the cabinet. The secretary of state maintained, singly, the opinion, that, during the existence of the provision order,[1] and during the war between Britain and France, this step ought not to be taken. This opinion did not prevail. The resolution was adopted to ratify the treaty immediately, and to accompany the ratification with a strong memorial against the provision order, which should convey, in explicit terms, the sense of the American government on that subject. By this course, the views of the executive were happily accomplished. The order was revoked, and the ratifications of the treaty were exchanged.

The President was most probably determined to adopt this course by the extreme intemperance with which the treaty was opposed, and the rapid progress which this violence was apparently making. It was obvious that, unless this temper could be checked, it would soon become so extensive, and would arrive at such a point of fury, as to threaten dangerous consequences. It was obviously necessary either to attempt a diminution of its action by rendering its exertions hopeless, and by giving to the treaty the weight of his character and influence, or to determine ultimately to yield to it. A species of necessity therefore seems to have been created for abandoning the idea, if it was ever taken up, of making the ratification of the treaty dependent on the revocation of the provision order.

The soundness of the policy which urged this decisive measure was proved by the event. The confidence which was felt in the judgment and virtue of the chief magistrate, induced many, who, swept away by the popular current, had yielded to the common prejudices, to re-examine, and discard opinions which had been too hastily embraced; and many were called forth by a desire to support the administration in measures actually adopted, to take a more active part in the general contest than they would otherwise have pursued. The consequence was, that more moderate opinions respecting the treaty began to prevail.

In a letter from Mount Vernon of the 20th of September, addressed to General Knox, who had communicated to him the change of opinion which was appearing in the eastern states, the President expressed in warm terms the pleasure derived from that circumstance, and added: "Next to a conscientious discharge of my public duties, to carry along with me the approbation of my constituents, would be the highest gratification of which my mind is susceptible. But the latter being secondary, I can not make the former yield to it, unless some criterion more infallible than partial (if they are not party) meetings can be discovered as the touchstone of public sentiment. If any person on earth could, or the great power above would, erect the standard of infallibility in political opinions, no being that inhabits this terrestrial globe would resort to it with more eagerness than myself, so long as I remain a servant of the public. But as I have hitherto found no better guide than upright intentions, and close investigation, I shall adhere to them while I keep the watch, leaving it to those who will come after me, to explore new ways, if they like, or think them better.

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[1] Previous to the reception of the account of this order, the opinion of the secretary had been in favour of ratifying the treaty.

If the ratification of the treaty increased the number of its open advocates, it seemed also to give increased acrimony to the opposition. Such hold had the President taken of the affections of the people, that even his enemies had deemed it generally necessary to preserve, with regard to him, external marks of decency and respect. Previous to the mission of Mr. Jay, charges against the chief magistrate, though frequently insinuated, had seldom been directly made; and the cover under which the attacks upon his character were conducted, evidenced the caution with which it was deemed necessary to proceed. That mission visibly affected the decorum which had been usually observed towards him; and the ratification of the treaty brought sensations into open view, which had long been ill concealed. His military and political character was attacked with equal violence, and it was averred that he was totally destitute of merit, either as a soldier, or a statesman. The calumnies with which he was assailed were not confined to his public conduct; even his qualities as a man were the subjects of detraction. That he had violated the constitution in negotiating a treaty without the previous advice of the senate, and in embracing within that treaty subjects belonging exclusively to the legislature, was openly maintained, for which an impeachment was publicly suggested; and that he had drawn from the treasury for his private use, more than the salary annexed to his office, was asserted without a blush.[1] This last allegation was said to be supported by extracts from the treasury accounts which had been laid before the legislature, and was maintained with the most persevering effrontery.

Though the secretary of the treasury denied that the appropriations made by the legislature had ever been exceeded, the atrocious charge was still confidently repeated; and the few who could triumph in any spot which might tarnish the lustre of Washington's fame, felicitated themselves on the prospect of obtaining a victory over the reputation of a patriot, to whose single influence, they ascribed the failure of their political plans. With the real public, the confidence felt in the integrity of the chief magistrate remained unshaken; but so imposing was the appearance of the documents adduced, as to excite an apprehension that the transaction might be placed in a light to show that some indiscretion, in which he had not participated, had been inadvertently committed.

This state of anxious suspense was of short duration. The late secretary of the treasury, during whose administration of the finances this peculation was said to have taken place, came forward with a full explanation of the fact. It appeared that the President himself had never touched any part of the compensation annexed to his office, but that the whole was received, and disbursed, by the gentleman who superintended the expenses of his household. That it was the practice of the treasury, when a sum had been appropriated for the current year, to pay it to that gentleman occasionally, as the situation of the family might require. The expenses at some periods of the year exceeded, and at others fell short of the allowance for the quarter; so that at some times money was paid in advance on account of the ensuing quarter, and at others, that which was due at the end of the quarter was not completely drawn out. The secretary entered into an examination of the constitution and laws to show that this practice was justifiable, and illustrated his arguments by many examples in which an advance on account of money appropriated to a particular object, before the service was completed, would be absolutely necessary. However this might be, it was a transaction in which the President personally was unconcerned.[1]

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[1] See the Aurora from August to December, 1795. See, in particular, a series of essays, signed "A Calm Observer," published from the 23d of October to the 5th of November, 1795.

When possessed of the entire fact, the public viewed, with just indignation, this attempt to defame a character which was the nation's pride. Americans felt themselves involved in this atrocious calumny on their most illustrious citizen; and its propagators were frowned into silence.

On the 19th of August, the secretary of state had resigned [2] his place in the administration, and some time elapsed before a successor was appointed.[3] At length, Colonel Pickering was removed to the department of state, and Mr. M'Henry, a gentleman who had served in the family of General Washington, and in the congress prior to the establishment of the existing constitution, was appointed to the department of war. By the death of Mr. Bradford, a vacancy was also produced in the office of attorney general, which was filled by Mr. Lee, a gentleman of considerable eminence at the bar, and in the legislature of Virginia.

Many of those embarrassments in which the government, from its institution, had been involved, were now ended, or approaching their termination.

The opposition to the laws, which had so long been made in the western counties of Pennsylvania, existed no longer.

On the third of August, a definitive treaty was concluded by General Wayne with the hostile Indians northwest of the Ohio, by which the destructive and expensive war which had long desolated that frontier, was ended in a manner perfectly agreeable to the United States. An accommodation had taken place with the powerful tribes of the south also; and to preserve peace in that quarter, it was only necessary to invest the executive with the means of restraining the incursions which the disorderly inhabitants of the southern frontier frequently made into the Indian territory; incursions, of which murder was often the consequence.

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[1] Gazette of the United States, 16th November, 1795.

[2] See Note, No. XX, at the end of the volume.

[3] See Note, No. XXI, at the end of the volume.

Few subjects had excited more feeling among the people, or in the government of the United States, than the captivity of their fellow citizens in Algiers. Even this calamity had been seized as a weapon which might be wielded with some effect against the President. Overlooking the exertions he had made for the attainment of peace, and the liberation of the American captives; and regardless of his inability to aid negotiation by the exhibition of force, the discontented ascribed the long and painful imprisonment of their unfortunate brethren to a carelessness in the administration respecting their sufferings, and to that inexhaustible source of accusation,—its policy with regard to France and Britain.

After the failure of several attempts to obtain a peace with the regency of Algiers, a treaty was, at length, negotiated on terms which, though disadvantageous, were the best that could be obtained.

The exertions of the executive to settle the controversy with Spain respecting boundary, and to obtain the free use of the Mississippi, had been unavailing. A negotiation in which Mr. Short and Mr. Carmichael were employed at Madrid, had been protracted by artificial delays on the part of the Spanish cabinet, until those ministers had themselves requested that the commission should be terminated.

At length, Spain, embarrassed by the war in which she was engaged, discovered symptoms of a temper more inclined to conciliation, and intimated to the secretary of state, through her commissioners at Philadelphia, that a minister, deputed on the special occasion, of higher rank than Mr. Short, who was a resident, would be able to expedite the negotiation. On receiving this intimation, the President, though retaining a high and just confidence in Mr. Short, nominated Mr. Pinckney, in November 1794, as envoy extraordinary to his Catholic majesty. Mr. Pinckney repaired in the following summer to Madrid, and a treaty was concluded on the 20th of October, in which the claims of the United States, on the important points of boundary, and the Mississippi, were fully conceded.

Thus were adjusted, so far as depended on the executive, all those external difficulties with which the United States had long struggled; most of which had originated before the establishment of the existing government, and some of which portended calamities that no common share of prudence could have averted.

Although the signature of the treaties with Spain and Algiers had not been officially announced at the meeting of congress, the state of the negotiations with both powers was sufficiently well understood to enable the President with confidence to assure the legislature, in his speech at the opening of the session, that those negotiations were in a train which promised a happy issue.

After expressing his gratification at the prosperous state of American affairs, the various favourable events which have been already enumerated were detailed in a succinct statement, at the close of which he mentioned the British treaty, which, though publicly known, had not before been communicated officially to the house of representatives.

"This interesting summary of our affairs," continued the speech, "with regard to the powers between whom and the United States controversies have subsisted; and with regard also to our Indian neighbours with whom we have been in a state of enmity or misunderstanding, opens a wide field for consoling and gratifying reflections. If by prudence and moderation on every side, the extinguishment of all the causes of external discord which have heretofore menaced our tranquillity, on terms compatible with our national faith and honour, shall be the happy results,—how firm and how precious a foundation will have been laid for accelerating, maturing, and establishing the prosperity of our country."

After presenting an animated picture of the situation of the United States, and recommending several objects to the attention of the legislature, the President concluded with observing: "Temperate discussion of the important subjects that may arise in the course of the session, and mutual forbearance where there is a difference in opinion, are too obvious and necessary for the peace, happiness, and welfare of our country, to need any recommendation of mine."

In the senate, an address was reported which echoed back the sentiments of the speech.

In this house of representatives, as in the last, the party in opposition to the administration had obtained a majority. This party was unanimously hostile to the treaty with Great Britain; and it was expected that their answer to the speech of the President, would indicate their sentiments on a subject which continued to agitate the whole American people. The answer reported by the committee, contained a declaration that the confidence of his fellow citizens in the chief magistrate remained undiminished.

On a motion, to strike out the words importing this sentiment, it was averred, that the clause asserted an untruth. It was not true that the confidence of the people in the President was undiminished. By a recent transaction it had been considerably impaired; and some gentlemen declared that their own confidence in him was lessened.

By the friends of the administration, the motion was opposed with great zeal, and the opinion that the confidence of the people in their chief magistrate remained unshaken, was maintained with ardour. But they were outnumbered.

To avoid a direct vote on the proposition, it was moved, that the address should be recommitted. This motion succeeded, and, two members being added to the committee, an answer was reported in which the clause objected to was so modified as to be free from exception.

That part of the speech which mentioned the treaty with Great Britain, was alluded to in terms which, though not directly expressive of disapprobation, were sufficiently indicative of the prevailing sentiment.

Early in the month of January the President transmitted to both houses of congress a message, accompanying certain communications from the French government which were well calculated to cherish those ardent feelings that prevailed in the legislature.

It was the fortune of Mr. Monroe to reach Paris, soon after the death of Robespierre, and the fall of the jacobins. On his reception as the minister of the United States, which was public, and in the convention, he gave free scope to the genuine feelings of his heart; and, at the same time, delivered to the President of that body, with his credentials, two letters addressed by the secretary of state to the committee of public safety. These letters were answers to one written by the committee of safety to the congress of the United States. The executive department being the organ through which all foreign intercourse was to be conducted, each branch of the legislature had passed a resolution directing this letter to be transmitted to the President, with a request, that he would cause it to be answered in terms expressive of their friendly dispositions towards the French republic.

So fervent were the sentiments expressed on this occasion, that the convention decreed that the flag of the American and French republics should be united together, and suspended in its own hall, in testimony of eternal union and friendship between the two people. To evince the impression made on his mind by this act, and the grateful sense of his constituents, Mr. Monroe presented to the convention the flag of the United States, which he prayed them to accept as a proof of the sensibility with which his country received every act of friendship from its ally, and of the pleasure with which it cherished every incident which tended to cement and consolidate the union between the two nations.

The committee of safety, disregarding the provisions of the American constitution, although their attention must have been particularly directed to them by the circumstance that the letter to congress was referred by that body to the executive, again addressed the legislature in terms adapted to that department of government which superintends its foreign intercourse, and expressive, among other sentiments, of the sensibility with which the French nation had perceived those sympathetic emotions with which the American people had viewed the vicissitudes of her fortune. Mr. Adet, who was to succeed Mr. Fauchet at Philadelphia, and who was the bearer of this letter, also brought with him the colours of France, which he was directed to present to the United States. He arrived in the summer; but probably in the idea that these communications were to be made by him directly to congress, did not announce them to the executive until late in December.

The first day of the new year was named for their reception; 1796. when the colours were delivered to the President, and the letter to congress also was placed in his hands.

In executing this duty, Mr. Adet addressed a speech to the President, which, in the glowing language of his country, represented France as struggling, not only for her own liberty, but for that of the human race. "Assimilated to, or rather identified with free people by the form of her government, she saw in them," he said, "only friends and brothers. Long accustomed to regard the American people as her most faithful allies, she sought to draw closer the ties already formed in the fields of America, under the auspices of victory, over the ruins of tyranny."

To answer this speech was a task of some delicacy. It was necessary to express feelings adapted to the occasion, without implying sentiments with respect to the belligerent powers, which might be improper to be used by the chief magistrate of a neutral country. With a view to both these objects, the President made the following reply:

"Born, sir, in a land of liberty; having early learned its value; having engaged in a perilous conflict to defend it; having, in a word, devoted the best years of my life to secure its permanent establishment in my own country; my anxious recollections, my sympathetic feelings, and my best wishes, are irresistibly attracted, whensoever, in any country, I see an oppressed nation unfurl the banners of freedom. But above all, the events of the French revolution have produced the deepest solicitude, as well as the highest admiration. To call your nation brave, were to pronounce but common praise. Wonderful people! Ages to come will read with astonishment the history of your brilliant exploits. I rejoice that the period of your toils, and of your immense sacrifices is approaching. I rejoice that the interesting revolutionary movements of so many years have issued in the formation of a constitution,[1] designed to give permanency to the great object for which you have contended. I rejoice that liberty, which you have so long embraced with enthusiasm,—liberty, of which you have been the invincible defenders, now finds an asylum in the bosom of a regularly organized government;—a government which, being formed to secure the happiness of the French people, corresponds with the ardent wishes of my heart, while it gratifies the pride of every citizen of the United States by its resemblance to their own. On these glorious events, accept, sir, my sincere congratulations.

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[1] Subsequent to the mission of Mr. Adet, but previous to this time, the revolutionary government which succeeded the abolition of monarchy had yielded to the constitution of the republican form.

"In delivering to you these sentiments, I express not my own feelings only, but those of my fellow citizens in relation to the commencement, the progress, and the issue of the French revolution: and they will certainly join with me in purest wishes to the Supreme Being, that the citizens of our sister republic, our magnanimous allies, may soon enjoy in peace, that liberty which they have purchased at so great a price, and all the happiness that liberty can bestow.

"I receive, sir, with lively sensibility, the symbol of the triumphs, and of the infranchisements of your nation, the colours of France, which you have now presented to the United States. The transaction will be announced to congress, and the colours will be deposited with the archives of the United States, which are at once the evidence and the memorials of their freedom and independence; may these be perpetual! and may the friendship of the two republics be commensurate with their existence."

The address of Mr. Adet, the answer of the President, and the colours of France, were transmitted to congress with the letter from the committee of safety.

In the house of representatives a resolution was moved, requesting the President to make known to the representatives of the French republic, the sincere and lively sensations which were excited by this honourable testimony of the existing sympathy and affections of the two republics; that the house rejoiced in an opportunity of congratulating the French republic on the brilliant and glorious achievements accomplished during the present afflictive war; and hoped that those achievements would be attended with a perfect attainment of their object, the permanent establishment of the liberty and happiness of that great and magnanimous people.

The letter to congress having come from the committee of safety which, under the revolutionary system, was the department that was charged with foreign intercourse; and a constitution having been afterwards adopted in France, by which an executive directory was established, to which all the foreign relations of the government were confided, an attempt was made to amend this resolution, by substituting the directory for the representatives of the people. But this attempt failed; after which the resolution passed unanimously.

In the senate also a resolution was offered, expressive of the sensations of that house, and requesting the President to communicate them to the proper organ of the French republic. An amendment was moved to vary this resolution so as to express the sentiment to the President, and omit the request that it should be communicated to the French republic. The complimentary correspondence between the two nations, had, it was said, reached a point, when, if ever, it ought to close. This amendment, though strenuously combated by the opposition, was adopted.

In February, the treaty with Great Britain was returned, in the form advised by the senate, ratified by his Britannic majesty. The constitution declaring a treaty, when made, the supreme law of the land, the President announced it officially to the people in a proclamation, requiring from all persons its observance and execution; a copy of which was transmitted to each house on the 1st of March.

The party which had obtained the majority in one branch of the legislature, having openly denied the right of the President to negotiate a treaty of commerce, was not a little dissatisfied at his venturing to issue this proclamation before the sense of the house of representatives had been declared on the obligation of the instrument.

This dissatisfaction was not concealed. On the 2d of March, Mr. Livingston laid upon the table a resolution, requesting the President "to lay before the house a copy of the instructions to the minister of the United States, who negotiated the treaty with the king of Great Britain, communicated by his message of the 1st of March, together with the correspondence and other documents relative to the said treaty."

On the 7th of March, he amended this resolution by adding the words, "excepting such of the said papers as any existing negotiation may render improper to be disclosed."

After some debate, Mr. Madison proposed to modify the amendment of Mr. Livingston, so as to except such papers, as in the judgment of the President, it might be inconsistent with the interest of the United States at this time to disclose. This proposition was rejected by a majority of ten voices, and the discussion of the original resolution was resumed. The debate soon glided into an argument on the nature and extent of the treaty making power.

The friends of the administration maintained, that a treaty was a contract between two nations, which, under the constitution, the President, by and with the advice and consent of the senate, had a right to make; and that it was made when, by and with such advice and consent, it had received his final act. Its obligations then became complete on the United States; and to refuse to comply with its stipulations, was to break the treaty, and to violate the faith of the nation.

The opposition contended, that the power to make treaties, if applicable to every object, conflicted with powers which were vested exclusively in congress. That either the treaty making power must be limited in its operation, so as not to touch objects committed by the constitution to congress, or the assent and co-operation of the house of representatives must be required to give validity to any compact, so far as it might comprehend those objects. A treaty, therefore, which required an appropriation of money, or any act of congress to carry it into effect, had not acquired its obligatory force until the house of representatives had exercised its powers in the case. They were at full liberty to make, or to withhold, such appropriation, or other law, without incurring the imputation of violating any existing obligation, or of breaking the faith of the nation.

The debate on this question was animated, vehement, and argumentative; all the party passions were enlisted in it; and it was protracted until the 24th of March, when the resolution was carried in the affirmative by sixty-two to thirty-seven voices. The next day, the committee appointed to present it to the chief magistrate reported his answer, which was, "that he would take the resolution into consideration."

The situation in which this vote placed the President was peculiarly delicate. In an elective government, the difficulty of resisting the popular branch of the legislature is at all times great, but is particularly so when the passions of the public have been strongly and generally excited. The popularity of a demand for information, the large majority by which that demand was supported, the additional force which a refusal to comply with it would give to suspicions already insinuated, that circumstances had occurred in the negotiation which the administration dared not expose, and that the President was separating himself from the representatives of the people, furnished motives, not lightly to be overruled, for yielding to the request which had been made.

But these considerations were opposed by others which, though less operative with men who fear to deserve the public favour by hazarding its loss, possess an irresistible influence over a mind resolved to pursue steadily the path of duty, however it may abound with thorns.

That the future diplomatic transactions of the government might be seriously and permanently affected by establishing the principle that the house of representatives could demand as a right, the instructions given to a foreign minister, and all the papers connected with a negotiation, was too apparent to be unobserved. Nor was it less obvious that a compliance with the request now made, would go far in establishing this principle. The form of the request, and the motives which induced it, equally led to this conclusion. It left nothing to the discretion of the President with regard to the public interests; and the information was asked for the avowed purpose of determining whether the house of representatives would give effect to a public treaty.

It was also a subject for serious reflection, that in a debate unusually elaborate, the house of representatives had claimed a right of interference in the formation of treaties, which, in the judgment of the President, the constitution had denied them. Duties the most sacred requiring that he should resist this encroachment on the department which was particularly confided to him, he could not hesitate respecting the course it became him to take; and on the 30th of March he returned the following answer to the resolution which had been presented to him.

"Gentlemen of the house of representatives,

"With the utmost attention I have considered your resolution of the 24th instant, requesting me to lay before your house, a copy of the instructions to the minister of the United States, who negotiated the treaty with the king of Great Britain, together with the correspondence and other documents relative to that treaty, excepting such of the said papers, as any existing negotiation may render improper to be disclosed.

"In deliberating upon this subject, it was impossible for me to lose sight of the principle which some have avowed in its discussion, or to avoid extending my views to the consequences which must flow from the admission of that principle.

"I trust that no part of my conduct has ever indicated a disposition to withhold any information which the constitution has enjoined it upon the President as a duty to give, or which could be required of him by either house of congress as a right; and with truth I affirm, that it has been, as it will continue to be, while I have the honour to preside in the government, my constant endeavour to harmonize with the other branches thereof, so far as the trust delegated to me by the people of the United States, and my sense of the obligation it imposes, to preserve, protect and defend the constitution[1] will permit.

"The nature of foreign negotiations require caution, and their success must often depend on secrecy: and even when brought to a conclusion, a full disclosure of all the measures, demands, or eventual concessions which may have been proposed or contemplated would be extremely impolitic; for this might have a pernicious influence on future negotiations, or produce immediate inconveniencies, perhaps danger and mischief to other persons. The necessity of such caution and secrecy was one cogent reason for vesting the power of making treaties in the President, with the advice and consent of the senate, the principle on which that body was formed confining it to a small number of members.

"To admit then a right in the house of representatives to demand, and to have as a matter of course, all the papers respecting a negotiation with a foreign power, would be to establish a dangerous precedent.

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[1] The words of the oath of office prescribed for the chief magistrate.

"It does not occur that the inspection of the papers asked for, can be relative to any purpose under the cognizance of the house of representatives, except that of an impeachment, which the resolution has not expressed. I repeat that I have no disposition to withhold any information which the duty of my station will permit, or the public good shall require to be disclosed; and in fact, all the papers affecting the negotiation with Great Britain were laid before the senate, when the treaty itself was communicated for their consideration and advice.

"The course which the debate has taken on the resolution of the house, leads to some observations on the mode of making treaties under the constitution of the United States.

"Having been a member of the general convention, and knowing the principles on which the constitution was formed, I have ever entertained but one opinion upon this subject; and from the first establishment of the government to this moment, my conduct has exemplified that opinion. That the power of making treaties is exclusively vested in the President, by and with the advice and consent of the senate, provided two-thirds of the senators present concur; and that every treaty so made and promulgated, thenceforward becomes the law of the land. It is thus that the treaty making power has been understood by foreign nations: and in all the treaties made with them, *we* have declared, and *they* have believed, that when ratified by the President with the advice and consent of the senate, they became obligatory. In this construction of the constitution, every house of representatives has heretofore acquiesced; and until the present time not a doubt or suspicion has appeared to my knowledge, that this construction was not a true one. Nay, they have more than acquiesced; for until now, without controverting the obligation of such treaties, they have made all the requisite provisions for carrying them into effect.

"There is also reason to believe that this construction agrees with the opinions entertained by the state conventions when they were deliberating on the constitution; especially by those who objected to it, because there was not required in commercial treaties, the consent of two-thirds of the whole number of the members of the senate, instead of two-thirds of the senators present; and because in treaties respecting territorial and certain other rights and claims, the concurrence of three-fourths of the whole number of the members of both houses respectively was not made necessary.

"It is a fact declared by the general convention and universally understood, that the constitution of the United States was the result of a spirit of amity and mutual concession. And it is well known, that under this influence, the smaller states were admitted to an equal representation in the senate with the larger states; and that this branch of the government was invested with great power; for on the equal participation of those powers, the sovereignty and political safety of the smaller states were deemed essentially to depend.

"If other proofs than these and the plain letter of the constitution itself be necessary to ascertain the point under consideration, they may be found in the journals of the general convention which I have deposited in the office of the department of state. In these journals it will appear, that a proposition was made 'that no treaty should be binding on the United States which was not ratified by a law,' and that the proposition was explicitly rejected.

"As therefore it is perfectly clear to my understanding that the assent of the house of representatives is not necessary to the validity of a treaty; as the treaty with Great Britain exhibits in itself all the objects requiring legislative provision; and on these the papers called for can throw no light; and as it is essential to the due administration of the government that the boundaries fixed by the constitution between the different departments should be preserved; a just regard to the constitution, and to the duty of my office, under all the circumstances of this case, forbid a compliance with your request."

The terms in which this decided, and, it would seem, unexpected negative to the call for papers was conveyed, appeared to break the last cord of that attachment which had theretofore bound some of the active leaders of the opposition to the person of the President. Amidst all the agitations and irritations of party, a sincere respect, and real affection, for the chief magistrate, the remnant of former friendship, had still lingered in the bosoms of some who had engaged with ardour in the political contests of the day. But, if the last spark of this affection was not now extinguished, it was at least concealed under the more active passions of the moment.

A motion to refer the message of the President to a committee of the whole house, was carried by a large majority. In committee, resolutions were moved by Mr. Blount of North Carolina, declaratory of the sense of the house respecting its own power on the subject of treaties. These resolutions take a position less untenable than had been maintained in argument, and rather inexplicit on an essential part of the question. Disclaiming a power to interfere in making treaties, they assert the right of the house of representatives, whenever stipulations are made on subjects committed by the constitution to congress, to deliberate on the expediency of carrying them into effect, without deciding what degree of obligation the treaty possesses on the nation, so far as respects those points, previous to such deliberation. After a debate in which the message was freely criticised, the resolutions were carried, fifty-seven voting in the affirmative, and thirty-five in the negative.

In the course of the month of March, the treaties with his Catholic majesty, and with the Dey of Algiers, had been ratified by the President, and were laid before congress. On the 13th of April, in a committee of the whole house on the state of the union, the instant the chairman was seated, Mr. Sedgwick moved "that provision ought to be made by law for carrying into effect with good faith the treaties lately concluded with the Dey and Regency of Algiers, the King of Great Britain, the King of Spain, and certain Indian tribes northwest of the Ohio."

This motion produced a warm altercation. The members of the majority complained loudly of the celerity with which it had been made, and resented the attempt to blend together four treaties in the same resolution, after the solemn vote entered upon their journals, declaratory of their right to exercise a free discretion over the subject, as an indignity to the opinions and feelings of the house.

After a discussion manifesting the irritation which existed, the resolution was amended, by changing the word "treaties" from the plural to the singular number, and by striking out the words "Dey and Regency of Algiers, the King of Great Britain, and certain Indian tribes northwest of the river Ohio," so that only the treaty with the King of Spain remained to be considered.

Mr. Gallatin then objected to the words "provision ought to be made by law," as the expression seemed to imply a negative of the principle laid down in their resolution, that the house was at perfect liberty to pass, or not to pass, any law for giving effect to a treaty. In lieu of them, he wished to introduce words declaring the expediency of passing the necessary laws. This amendment was objected to as an innovation on the forms which had been invariably observed; but it was carried; after which, the words "with good faith," were also discarded.

The resolution thus amended was agreed to without a dissenting voice; and then, similar resolutions were passed respecting the treaties with Algiers, and with the Indians northwest of the Ohio.

This business being despatched, the treaty with Great Britain was brought before the house. The friends of that instrument urged an immediate decision of the question. On a subject which had so long agitated the whole community, the judgment of every member, they believed, was completely formed; and the hope to make converts by argument was desperate. In fact, they appeared to have entertained the opinion that the majority would not dare to encounter the immense responsibility of breaking that treaty, without previously ascertaining that the great body of the people were willing to meet the consequences of the measure. But the members of the opposition, though confident of their power to reject the resolution, called for its discussion. The expectation might not unreasonably have been entertained, that the passions belonging to the subject would be so inflamed by debate, as to produce the expression of a public sentiment favourable to their wishes; and, if in this they should be disappointed, it would be certainly unwise, either as a party, or as a branch of the legislature, to plunge the nation into embarrassments in which it was not disposed to entangle itself, and from which the means of extricating it could not be distinctly perceived.

The minority soon desisted from urging an immediate decision of the question; and the spacious field which was opened by the propositions before the house, seemed to be entered with equal avidity and confidence by both parties.

At no time perhaps have the members of the national legislature been stimulated to great exertions by stronger feelings than impelled them on this occasion. Never has a greater display been made of argument, of eloquence, and of passion; and never has a subject been discussed in which all classes of their fellow citizens took a deeper interest.

To those motives which a doubtful contest for power, and for victory, can not fail to furnish, were added others of vast influence on the human mind. Those who supported the resolution, declaring the expediency of carrying the treaty into effect, firmly believed that the faith of the nation was pledged, and that its honour, its character, and its constitution, depended on the vote about to be given. They also believed that the best interests of the United States required an observance of the compact as formed. In itself, it was thought as favourable as the situation of the contracting parties, and of the world, entitled them to expect; but its chief merit consisted in the adjustment of ancient differences, and in its tendency to produce future amicable dispositions, and friendly intercourse. If congress should refuse to perform this treaty on the part of the United States, a compliance on the part of Great Britain could not be expected. The posts on the great lakes would still be occupied by their garrisons; no compensation would be made for American vessels illegally captured; the hostile dispositions which had been excited would be restored with increased aggravation; and that these dispositions must lead infallibly to war, was implicitly believed. They also believed that the political subjugation of their country would be the inevitable consequence of a war with Britain, during the existing impassioned devotion of the United States to France.

The opposite party was undoubtedly of opinion that the treaty contained stipulations really injurious to the United States. Several favourite principles to which they attached much importance, were relinquished by it; and some of the articles relative to commerce, were believed to be unequal in their operation. Nor ought the sincerity with which their opinion on the constitutional powers of the house had been advanced, to be questioned. In the fervour of political discussion, that construction which, without incurring the imputation of violating the national faith, would enable the popular branch of the legislature to control the President and senate in making treaties, may have been thought the safe and the correct construction. But no consideration appears to have had more influence than the apprehension that the amicable arrangements made with Great Britain, would seriously affect the future relations of the United States with France.

Might a conjecture on this subject be hazarded, it would be that, in the opinion of many intelligent men, the preservation of that honest and real neutrality between the belligerent powers, at which the executive had aimed, was impracticable; that America would probably be forced into the war; and that the possibility of a rupture with France was a calamity too tremendous not to be avoided at every hazard.

As had been foreseen, this animated debate was on a subject too deeply and immediately interesting to the people, not to draw forth their real sentiments. The whole country was agitated; meetings were again held throughout the United States; and the strength of parties was once more tried.

The fallacy of many of the objections to the treaty had been exposed, the odium originally excited against it had been diminished, the belief that its violation would infallibly precipitate the nation into a war, if not universal, was extensive. These considerations brought reflecting men into action; and the voice of the nation was pronounced unequivocally with the minority in the house of representatives.

This manifestation of the public sentiment was decisive with congress. On the 29th of April the question was taken in the committee of the whole, and was determined, by the casting vote of the chairman, in favour of the expediency of making the necessary laws. The resolution was finally carried, fifty-one voting in the affirmative, and forty-eight in the negative.

That necessity to which a part of the majority in the house of representatives had reluctantly yielded, operated on no other subject; nor did it affect the strength of parties. Their opinion respecting that system of policy which ought to be observed in their external relations, remained the same; and their partialities and prejudices for and against foreign nations, sustained no diminution.

With regard to internal affairs also, the same spirit was retained.

So excessive had been the jealousy entertained by the opposition against a military force of any kind, that, even under the pressure of the Algerine war, the bill providing a naval armament could not be carried through the house without the insertion of a section suspending all proceedings under the act, should that war be terminated. The event which was to arrest the executive in the prosecution of this work having occurred, not a single frigate could be completed, without further authority from the legislature. This circumstance was the more important, as a peace had not been concluded with Tunis, or Tripoli; and, of consequence, the Mediterranean could not yet be safely navigated by the vessels of the United States. The President called the attention of congress to this subject; and stated the loss which would accrue from the sudden interruption of the work, and dispersion of the workmen. A bill to enable him to complete three, instead of six frigates, was with difficulty carried through the house.

But, except the treaty with Great Britain, no subject was brought forward in which parties felt a deeper interest, than on those questions which related to the revenue.

Notwithstanding the increasing productiveness of the duties on external commerce, this resource had not yet become entirely adequate to the exigencies of the nation. To secure the complete execution of the system for gradually redeeming the public debt, without disregarding those casualties to which all nations are exposed, it was believed that some additional aids to the treasury would be required. Upon the nature of these aids, much contrariety of opinion prevailed. The friends of the administration were in favour of extending the system of indirect internal taxation: but, constituting the minority in one branch of the legislature, they could carry no proposition on which the opposition was united, and the party which had become the majority in the house of representatives, had been generally hostile to that mode of obtaining revenue. From an opinion that direct taxes were recommended by intrinsic advantages, or that the people would become more attentive to the charges against the administration, should their money be drawn from them by visible means, those who wished power to change hands, had generally manifested a disposition to oblige those who exercised it, to resort to a system of revenue, by which a great degree of sensibility will always be excited. The indirect taxes proposed in the committee of ways and means were strongly resisted; and only that which proposed an augmentation of the duty on carriages for pleasure was passed into a law.

On the first day of June, this long and interesting session was terminated. No preceding legislature had been engaged in discussion by which their own passions, or those of their constituents were more strongly excited; nor on subjects more vitally important to the United States.

From this view of the angry contests of party, it may not be unacceptable to turn aside for a moment, and to look back to a transaction in which the movements of a feeling heart discover themselves, not the less visibly, for being engaged in a struggle with the stern duties of a public station.

No one of those foreigners who, during the war of the revolution, had engaged in the service of the United States, had embraced their cause with so much enthusiasm, or had held so distinguished a place in the affections of General Washington, as the Marquis de Lafayette. The attachment of these illustrious personages to each other had been openly expressed, and had yielded neither to time, nor to the remarkable vicissitudes of fortune with which the destinies of one of them had been chequered. For his friend, while guiding the course of a revolution which fixed the anxious attention of the world, or while a prisoner in Prussia, or in the dungeon of Olmutz the President manifested the same esteem, and felt the same solicitude. The extreme jealousy, however, with which the persons who administered the government of France, as well as a large party in America, watched his deportment towards all those whom the ferocious despotism of the jacobins had exiled from their country, imposed upon him the painful necessity of observing great circumspection in his official conduct, on this delicate subject. A formal interposition in favour of the virtuous and unfortunate victim of their furious passions, would have been unavailing. Without benefiting the person whom it would be designed to aid, it might produce serious political mischief. But the American ministers employed at foreign courts were instructed to seize every fair occasion to express, unofficially the interest taken by the President in the fate of Lafayette; and to employ the most eligible means in their power to obtain his liberty, or to meliorate his situation. A confidential person [1] had been sent to Berlin to solicit his discharge: but before this messenger had reached his destination, the King of Prussia had delivered over his illustrious prisoner to the Emperor of Germany. Mr. Pinckney had been instructed not only to indicate the wishes of the President to the Austrian minister at London, but to endeavour, unofficially, to obtain the powerful mediation of Britain; and had at one time flattered himself that the cabinet of St. James would take an interest in the case; but this hope was soon dissipated.

After being disappointed in obtaining the mediation of the British cabinet, the President addressed the following letter to the Emperor of Germany.

"It will readily occur to your majesty that occasions may sometimes exist, on which official considerations would constrain the chief of a nation to be silent and passive in relation even to objects which affect his sensibility and claim his interposition as a man. Finding myself precisely in this situation at present, I take the liberty of writing this private letter to your majesty, being persuaded that my motives will also be my apology for it.

"In common with the people of this country, I retain a strong and cordial sense of the services rendered to them by the Marquis de Lafayette; and my friendship for him has been constant and sincere. It is natural, therefore, that I should sympathize with him and his family in their misfortunes, and endeavour to mitigate the calamities they experience, among which his present confinement is not the least distressing.

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[1] Mr. James Marshall.

"I forbear to enlarge on this delicate subject. Permit me only to submit to your majesty's consideration, whether his long imprisonment, and the confiscation of his estate, and the indigence and dispersion of his family, and the painful anxieties incident to all these circumstances, do not form an assemblage of sufferings which recommend him to the mediation of humanity? allow me, sir, on this occasion, to be its organ; and to entreat that he may be permitted to come to this country, on such conditions, and under such restrictions, as your majesty may think it expedient to prescribe.

"As it is a maxim with me not to ask what, under similar circumstances, I would not grant, your majesty will do me the justice to believe that this request appears to me to correspond with those great principles of magnanimity and wisdom, which form the basis of sound policy, and durable glory."

This letter was transmitted to Mr. Pinckney to be conveyed to the Emperor through his minister at London. How far it operated in mitigating immediately the rigour of Lafayette's confinement, or in obtaining his liberation, remains unascertained.

CHAPTER XI

THE confidential friends of the President had long known his fixed purpose to retire from office at the end of his second term, and the people generally suspected it. 1796. Those who dreaded a change of system, in changing the person, of the chief magistrate manifested an earnest desire to avoid this hazard, by being permitted once more to offer to the public choice a person who, amidst all the fierce conflicts of party, still remained the object of public veneration. But his resolution was to be shaken only by the obvious approach of a perilous crisis, which, endangering the safety of the nation, would make it unworthy of his character, and incompatible with his principles, to retreat from its service. In the apprehension that the co-operation of external with internal causes might bring about such a crisis, he had yielded to the representations of those who urged him to leave himself master of his conduct, by withholding a public declaration of his intention, until the propriety of affording a reasonable time to fix on a successor should require its disclosure. "If," said Colonel Hamilton in a letter on this subject of the fifth of July, "a storm gathers, how can you retreat? this is a most serious question."

The suspense produced in the public opinion by this silence on the part of the chief magistrate, seemed to redouble the efforts of those who laboured to rob him of the affection of the people, and to attach odium to the political system which he had pursued. As passion alone is able successfully to contend with passion, they still sought, in the hate which America bore to Britain, and in her love to France, for the most powerful means with which to eradicate her love to Washington. Amongst the various artifices employed to effect this object, was the publication of those queries which had been propounded by the President to his cabinet council, previous to the arrival of Mr. Genet. This publication was intended to demonstrate the existence of a disposition in the chief magistrate unfriendly to the French republic, of "a Machiavelian policy, which nothing but the universal sentiment of enthusiastic affection displayed by the *people* of the United States, on the arrival of Mr. Genet, could have subdued." Some idea of the intemperance of the day may be formed from the conclusion of that number of a series of virulent essays, in which these queries were inserted, and from recollecting that it was addressed to a man who, more than any other, had given character as well as independence to his country; and whose life, devoted to her service, had exhibited one pure undeviating course of virtuous exertion to promote her interests.

It is in these words: "The foregoing queries were transmitted for consideration to the heads of departments, previously to a meeting to be held at the President's house. The text needs no commentary. It has stamped upon its front in characters brazen enough for idolatry to comprehend, perfidy and ingratitude. To doubt in such a case was dishonourable, to proclaim those doubts treachery. For the honour of the American character and of human nature, it is to be lamented that the records of the United States exhibit such a stupendous monument of degeneracy. It will almost require the authenticity of holy writ to persuade posterity that it is not a libel ingeniously contrived to injure the reputation of the saviour of his country."

As this state paper was perfectly confidential, and had been communicated only to the cabinet ministers, Mr. Jefferson thought proper to free himself from any possible suspicion of having given it publicity, by assuring the President that this breach of confidence must be ascribed to some other person.

In answer to this letter the President said—

"If I had entertained any suspicion before, that the queries which have been published in Bache's paper proceeded from you, the assurances you have given of the contrary would have removed them:—but the truth is, I harboured none. I am at no loss to conjecture from what source they flowed, through what channel they were conveyed, nor for what purpose they and similar publications appear.

"As you have mentioned[1] the subject yourself, it would not be frank, candid, or friendly to conceal, that your conduct has been represented as derogating from that opinion I conceived you entertained of me; that to your particular friends and connexions you have described, and they have denounced me, as a person under a dangerous influence, and that, if I would listen *more* to some *other* opinions, all would be well. My answer invariably has been, that I had never discovered any thing in the conduct of Mr. Jefferson to raise suspicions in my mind of his sincerity, that if he would retrace my public conduct while he was in the administration, abundant proofs would occur to him, that truth and right decisions were the *sole* objects of my pursuit; that there were as many instances within his *own* knowledge of my having decided *against* as in *favour* of the person evidently alluded to; and moreover, that I was no believer in the infallibility of the politics or measures of any man living. In short, that I was no party man myself, and that the first wish of my heart was, if parties did exist, to reconcile them.

"To this I may add, and very truly, that until the last year or two, I had no conception that parties would, or even could go the lengths I have been witness to; nor did I believe, until lately, that it was within the bounds of probability—hardly within those of possibility—that while I was using my utmost exertions to establish a national character of our own, independent as far as our obligations and justice would permit, of every nation of the earth; and wished by steering a steady course to preserve this country from the horrors of a desolating war, I should be accused of being the enemy of one nation and subject to the influence of another; and to prove it, that every act of my administration would be tortured, and the grossest and most insidious misrepresentations of them be made, by giving one side only of a subject, and that too in such exaggerated and indecent terms as could scarcely be applied to a Nero—to a notorious defaulter—or even to a common pickpocket.

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[1] In the same letter Mr. Jefferson had stated his total abstraction from party questions.

"But enough of this—I have already gone further in the expression of my feelings than I intended."

Of the numerous misrepresentations and fabrications which, with unwearied industry, were pressed upon the public in order to withdraw the confidence of the nation from its chief, no one marked more strongly the depravity of that principle which justifies the means by the end, than the republication of certain forged letters, purporting to have been written by General Washington in the year 1776.

These letters had been originally published in the year 1777, and in them were interspersed, with domestic occurrences which might give them the semblance of verity, certain political sentiments favourable to Britain in the then existing contest.

But the original fabricator of these papers missed his aim. It was necessary to assign the manner in which the possession of them was acquired; and in executing this part of his task, circumstances were stated so notoriously untrue, that, at the time, the meditated imposition deceived no person.

In the indefatigable research for testimony which might countenance the charge that the executive was unfriendly to France, and under the influence of Britain, these letters were drawn from the oblivion into which they had sunk, it had been supposed forever, and were republished as genuine. The silence with which the President treated this as well as every other calumny, was construed into an acknowledgment of its truth; and the malignant commentators on this spurious text, would not admit the possibility of its being apocryphal.

Those who laboured incessantly to establish the favourite position that the executive was under other than French influence, reviewed every act of the administration connected with its foreign relations, and continued to censure every part of the system with extreme bitterness. Not only the treaty with Great Britain, but all those measures which had been enjoined by the duties of neutrality, were reprobated as justly offensive to France; and no opinion which had been advanced by Mr. Genet, in his construction of the treaties between the two nations, was too extravagant to be approved. The ardent patriot can not maintain the choicest rights of his country with more zeal than was manifested in supporting all the claims of the French republic upon the United States. These discussions were not confined to the public prints. In almost every assemblage of individuals, whether for social or other purposes, this favourite theme excluded all others; and the pretensions of France were supported and controverted with equal earnestness. The opposing parties, mutually exasperated by unceasing altercations, cherished reciprocal suspicions of each other, and each charged its adversary with being under a foreign influence.[1] Those who favoured the measures adopted by America were accused as the enemies of liberty, the enemies of France, and the tools of Britain. In turn, they charged their opponents with disseminating principles subversive of all order in society; and with supporting a foreign government against their own.

Whatever might be the real opinion of the French government on the validity of its charges against the United States, those charges were too vehemently urged, and too powerfully espoused in America, to be abandoned at Paris. If at any time they were in part relinquished, they were soon resumed.

For a time, Mr. Fauchet forbore to press the points on which his predecessor had insisted; but his complaints of particular cases which grew out of the war, and out of the rules which had been established by the executive were unremitting. The respectful language in which these complaints were at first urged, soon yielded to the style of reproach; and in his correspondence with the secretary of state, towards its close, he adopted the sentiments, without absolutely discarding the manner of Mr. Genet.

Mr. Adet, the successor of Mr. Fauchet, arrived at Philadelphia, while the senate was deliberating on the treaty of amity with Great Britain.

In the observations he made on that instrument, when submitted to his consideration by order of the President, he complained particularly of the abandonment of the principle that free ships should make free goods; and urged the injustice, while French cruisers were restrained by treaty from taking English goods out of American bottoms, that English cruisers should be liberated from the same restraint. No demonstration could be more complete than was the fallacy of this complaint. But the American government discovered a willingness voluntarily to release France from the pressure of a situation in which she had elected to place herself.

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[1] See Note, XXII. at the end of the volume.

In the anxiety which was felt by the President to come to full and immediate explanations on this treaty, the American minister at Paris had been furnished, even before its ratification, and still more fully afterwards, with ample materials for the justification of his government. But, misconceiving[1] the views of the administration, he reserved these representations to answer complaints which were expected, and omitted to make them in the first instance, while the course to be pursued by the directory was under deliberation. Meanwhile, his letters kept up the alarm which had been excited with regard to the dispositions of France; and intelligence from the West Indies served to confirm it. Through a private channel, the President received information that the special agents of the directory in the islands were about to issue orders for the capture of all American vessels, laden in the whole or in part with provisions, and bound for any port within the dominions of the British crown.

Knowing well that the intentions of the executive towards the French republic had been at all times friendly, and entertaining a strong conviction that its conduct was liable to no just objection, the President had relied with confidence on early and candid communications, for the removal of any prejudices of misconceptions, which the passions of the moment might have occasioned. That the French government would be disappointed at the adjustment of those differences which had threatened to embroil the United States with Great Britain, could not be doubted; but as neither this adjustment, nor the arrangements connected with it, had furnished any real cause of complaint, he had cherished the hope that it would produce no serious consequences, if the proper means of prevention should be applied in time. He was therefore dissatisfied with delays which he had not expected; and seems to have believed that they originated in a want of zeal to justify a measure, which neither the minister himself nor his political friends had ever approved. To insure an earnest and active representation of the true sentiments and views of the administration, the President was inclined to depute an envoy extraordinary for the particular purpose, who should be united with the actual minister; but an objection drawn from the constitution was suggested to this measure. During the recess of the senate, the President can only fill up vacancies; and the appointment of a minister when no vacancy existed, might be supposed to transcend his powers. From respect to this construction of the constitution, the resolution was taken to appoint a successor to Colonel Monroe. The choice of a person in all respects qualified for this mission was not without its difficulty. While a disposition friendly to the administration was a requisite not to be dispensed with, it was also desirable that the person employed should have given no umbrage to the French government. No individual who had performed a conspicuous part on the political theatre of America, fitted both branches of this description. All who had openly sustained with zeal and with talents, the measures of the American government, had been marked as the enemies of France, and were on this account to be avoided.

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[1] See Monroe's View.

For this critical and important service, the President, after some deliberation, selected General Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, of South Carolina, an elder brother of Mr. Thomas Pinckney, the late[1] minister of the United States at London. No man in America was more perfectly free from exception than this gentleman. Having engaged with ardour in that war which gave independence to his country, he had, in its progress, sustained from the British army indignities to his person, and injuries to his fortune, which are not easily forgotten. In the early part of the French revolution, he had felt and expressed all the enthusiasm of his countrymen for the establishment of the republic; but, after the commencement of its contests with the United States, he stood aloof from both those political parties which had divided America. Restrained by the official situation of his brother during the negotiations which had been carried on with England, he had forborne to express any opinion respecting the treaty in which those negotiations terminated, and had consequently taken no part with those who approved, or with those who condemned that instrument. No man, therefore, who had not declared himself unfriendly to the principles he would be deputed to support, could be less objectionable to France.

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[1] At his own request, Mr. Pinckney had been recalled; and Mr. King, a gentleman whose talents have been universally acknowledged, and whose services will be long recollected with approbation, had succeeded him.

To the President he was recommended by an intimate knowledge of his worth; by a confidence in the sincerity of his personal attachment to the chief magistrate; by a conviction that his exertions to effect the objects of his mission would be ardent and sincere; and that, whatever might be his partialities for France, he possessed a high and delicate sense of national as well as individual honour, was jealous for the reputation of his country, and tenacious of its rights.

In July, immediately after the appointment of General Pinckney, letters were received from Colonel Monroe communicating the official complaints against the American government which had been made to him in March by Mr. de La Croix, the minister of exterior relations, together with his answer to those complaints.

In this answer the American minister had effectually refuted the criminations of Mr. de La Croix; and the executive was satisfied with it. But the Directory had decided on their system, and it was not by reasoning, however conclusive, that this decision was to be changed.

As the time for electing the chief magistrate approached, the anxiety of the public respecting the person in office, seemed to increase. In states where the electors are chosen by the people, names of great political influence were offered for their approbation. The strong hold which Washington had taken of the affections of his countrymen was, on this occasion, fully evinced. In districts where the opposition to his administration was most powerful, where all his measures were most loudly condemned, where those who approved his system possessed least influence, the men who appeared to control public opinion on every other subject, found themselves unable to move it on this. Even the most popular among the leaders of the opposition were reduced to the necessity of surrendering their pretensions to a place in the electoral body, or of pledging themselves to bestow their suffrage on the actual President. The determination of his fellow citizens had been unequivocally manifested, and it was believed to be apparent that the election would again be unanimous, when he announced his resolution to withdraw from the honours and the toils of office.

Having long contemplated this event, and having wished to terminate his political course with an act which might be at the same time suitable to his own character, and permanently useful to his country, he had prepared for the occasion a valedictory address, in which, with the solicitude of a person, who, in bidding a final adieu to his friends, leaves his affections and his anxieties for their welfare behind him, he made a last effort to impress upon his countrymen those great political truths which had been the guides of his own administration, and could alone, in his opinion, form a sure and solid basis for the happiness, the independence, and the liberty of the United States.

This interesting paper was published in September, at a time when hopes were entertained that the discontents of France might be appeased by proper representations. It contains precepts to which the American statesman can not too frequently recur, and though long, is thought too valuable to be omitted or abridged.

TO THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES.

"Friends and fellow citizens,

"The period for a new election of a citizen to administer the executive government of the United States being not far distant, and the time actually arrived when your thoughts must be employed in designating the person who is to be clothed with that important trust, it appears to me proper, especially as it may conduce to a more distinct expression of the public voice, that I should now apprize you of the resolution I have formed, to decline being considered among the number of those, out of whom a choice is to be made.

"I beg you, at the same time, to do me the justice to be assured, that this resolution has not been taken, without a strict regard to all the considerations appertaining to the relation which binds a dutiful citizen to his country; and that, in withdrawing the tender of service which silence in my situation might imply, I am influenced by no diminution of zeal for your future interest; no deficiency of grateful respect for your past kindness; but am supported by a full conviction that the step is compatible with both.

"The acceptance of, and continuance hitherto in the office to which your suffrages have twice called me, have been a uniform sacrifice of inclination to the opinion of duty, and to a deference for what appeared to be your desire. I constantly hoped that it would have been much earlier in my power, consistently with motives which I was not at liberty to disregard, to return to that retirement from which I had been reluctantly drawn. The strength of my inclination to do this, previous to the last election, had even led to the preparation of an address to declare it to you; but mature reflection on the then perplexed and critical posture of our affairs with foreign nations, and the unanimous advice of persons entitled to my confidence, impelled me to abandon the idea.

"I rejoice that the state of your concerns, external as well as internal, no longer renders the pursuit of inclination incompatible with the sentiment of duty or propriety; and am persuaded, whatever partiality may be retained for my services, that in the present circumstances of our country, you will not disapprove my determination to retire.

"The impressions with which I first undertook the arduous trust, were explained on the proper occasion. In the discharge of this trust, I will only say that I have, with good intentions, contributed towards the organization and administration of the government, the best exertions of which a very fallible judgment was capable. Not unconscious in the outset, of the inferiority of my qualifications, experience, in my own eyes, perhaps still more in the eyes of others, has strengthened the motives to diffidence of myself; and, every day, the increasing weight of years admonishes me more and more, that the shade of retirement is as necessary to me as it will be welcome.

Satisfied that if any circumstances have given peculiar value to my services, they were temporary, I have the consolation to believe that, while choice and prudence invite me to quit the political scene, patriotism does not forbid it.

"In looking forward to the moment which is to terminate the career of my political life, my feelings do not permit me to suspend the deep acknowledgment of that debt of gratitude which I owe to my beloved country, for the many honours it has conferred upon me; still more for the steadfast confidence with which it has supported me; and for the opportunities I have thence enjoyed of manifesting my inviolable attachment, by services faithful and persevering, though in usefulness unequal to my zeal. If benefits have resulted to our country from these services, let it always be remembered to your praise, and as an instructive example in our annals, that under circumstances in which the passions, agitated in every direction, were liable to mislead amidst appearances sometimes dubious, vicissitudes of fortune often discouraging—in situations in which not unfrequently, want of success has countenanced the spirit of criticism—the constancy of your support was the essential prop of the efforts, and a guarantee of the plans by which they were effected. Profoundly penetrated with this idea, I shall carry it with me to my grave, as a strong incitement to unceasing vows, that heaven may continue to you the choicest tokens of its beneficence—that your union and brotherly affection may be perpetual—that the free constitution, which is the work of your hands, may be sacredly maintained—that its administration in every department may be stamped with wisdom and virtue—that, in fine, the happiness of the people of these states, under the auspices of liberty, may be made complete by so careful a preservation, and so prudent a use of this blessing, as will acquire to them the glory of recommending it to the applause, the affection, and adoption of every nation which is yet a stranger to it.

"Here, perhaps, I ought to stop. But a solicitude for your welfare, which can not end but with my life, and the apprehension of danger, natural to that solicitude, urge me, on an occasion like the present, to offer to your solemn contemplation, and to recommend to your frequent review, some sentiments which are the result of much reflection, of no inconsiderable observation, and which appear to me all important to the permanency of your felicity as a people. These will be offered to you with the more freedom, as you can only see in them the disinterested warnings of a parting friend, who can possibly have no personal motive to bias his counsel. Nor can I forget, as an encouragement to it, your indulgent reception of my sentiments on a former and not dissimilar occasion.

"Interwoven as is the love of liberty with every ligament of your hearts, no recommendation of mine is necessary to fortify or confirm the attachment.

"The unity of government which constitutes you one people, is also now dear to you. It is justly so; for it is a main pillar in the edifice of your real independence; the support of your tranquillity at home; your peace abroad; of your safety; of your prosperity; of that very liberty which you so highly prize. But, as it is easy to foresee, that from different causes, and from different quarters, much pains will be taken, many artifices employed, to weaken in your minds the conviction of this truth; as this is the point in your political fortress against which the batteries of internal and external enemies will be most constantly and actively (though often covertly and insidiously) directed; it is of infinite moment, that you should properly estimate the immense value of your national union to your collective and individual happiness; that you should cherish a cordial, habitual, and immovable attachment to it; accustoming yourselves to think and speak of it as of the palladium of your political safety and prosperity; watching for its preservation with jealous anxiety; discountenancing whatever may suggest even a suspicion that it can, in any event, be abandoned; and indignantly frowning upon the first dawning of every attempt to alienate any portion of our country from the rest, or to enfeeble the sacred ties which now link together the various parts.

"For this you have every inducement of sympathy and interest. Citizens by birth, or choice, of a common country, that country has a right to concentrate your affections. The name of American, which belongs to you in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of patriotism, more than any appellation derived from local discriminations. With slight shades of difference, you have the same religion, manners, habits, and political principles.—You have, in a common cause, fought and triumphed together; the independence and liberty you possess, are the work of joint counsels, and joint efforts, of common dangers, sufferings, and successes.

"But these considerations, however powerfully they address themselves to your sensibility, are greatly outweighed by those which apply more immediately to your interest.—Here, every portion of our country finds the most commanding motives for carefully guarding and preserving the union of the whole.

"The *north,* in an unrestrained intercourse with the *south,* protected by the equal laws of a common government, finds in the productions of the latter, great additional resources of maritime and commercial enterprise, and precious materials of manufacturing industry.—The *south,* in the same intercourse, benefiting by the same agency of the *north,* sees its agriculture grow, and its commerce expand. Turning partly into its own channels the seamen of the *north,* it finds its particular navigation invigorated; and while it contributes, in different ways, to nourish and increase the general mass of the national navigation, it looks forward to the protection of a maritime strength, to which itself is unequally adapted. The *east,* in a like intercourse with the *west,* already finds, and in the progressive improvement of interior communications by land and water, will more and more find a valuable vent for the commodities which it brings from abroad, or manufactures at home. The *west* derives from the *east* supplies requisite to its growth and comfort—and what is perhaps of still greater consequence, it must of necessity owe the *secure* enjoyment of indispensable *outlets* for its own productions, to the weight, influence, and the future martime strength of the Atlantic side of the union, directed by an indissoluble community of interest as *one nation.* Any other tenure by which the *west* can hold this essential advantage, whether derived from its own separate strength, or from an apostate and unnatural connexion with any foreign power, must be intrinsically precarious.

"While then every part of our country thus feels an immediate and particular interest in union, all the parts combined can not fail to find in the united mass of means and efforts, greater strength, greater resource, proportionably greater security from external danger, a less frequent interruption of their peace by foreign nations; and, what is of inestimable value, they must derive from union an exemption from those broils and wars between themselves, which so frequently afflict neighbouring countries not tied together by the same government; which their own rivalships alone would be sufficient to produce, but which, opposite foreign alliances, attachments, and intrigues, would stimulate and imbitter.—Hence likewise, they will avoid the necessity of those overgrown military establishments, which under any form of government are inauspicious to liberty, and which are to be regarded as particularly hostile to republican liberty. In this sense it is, that your union ought to be considered as a main prop of your liberty, and that the love of the one ought to endear to you the preservation of the other.

"These considerations speak a persuasive language to every reflecting and virtuous mind, and exhibit the continuance of the union as a primary object of patriotic desire. Is there a doubt whether a common government can embrace so large a sphere? Let experience solve it. To listen to mere speculation in such a case were criminal. We are authorized to hope that a proper organization of the whole, with the auxiliary agency of governments for the respective subdivisions, will afford a happy issue to the experiment. It is well worth a fair and full experiment. With such powerful and obvious motives to union, affecting all parts of our country, while experience shall not have demonstrated its impracticability, there will always be reason to distrust the patriotism of those, who, in any quarter, may endeavour to weaken its bands.

"In contemplating the causes which may disturb our union, it occurs as matter of serious concern, that any ground should have beeen furnished for characterizing parties by *geographical* discriminations,—*northern* and *southern*—*Atlantic* and *western*; whence designing men may endeavour to excite a belief that there is a real difference of local interests and views. One of the expedients of party to acquire influence within particular districts, is to misrepresent the opinions and aims of other districts. You can not shield yourselves too much against the jealousies and heart burnings which spring from these misrepresentations: they tend to render alien to each other those who ought to be bound together by fraternal affection. The inhabitants of our western country have lately had a useful lesson on this head: they have seen, in the negotiation by the executive, and in the unanimous ratification by the senate of the treaty with Spain, and in the universal satisfaction at the event throughout the United States, a decisive proof how unfounded were the suspicions propagated among them of a policy in the general government and in the Atlantic states, unfriendly to their interests in regard to the Mississippi. They have been witnesses to the formation of two treaties, that with Great Britain and that with Spain, which secure to them every thing they could desire, in respect to our foreign relations, towards confirming their prosperity. Will it not be their wisdom to rely for the preservation of these advantages on the union by which they were procured? will they not henceforth be deaf to those advisers, if such there are, who would sever them from their brethren, and connect them with aliens?

"To the efficacy and permanency of your union, a government for the whole is indispensable. No alliances, however strict, between the parts can be an adequate substitute; they must inevitably experience the infractions and interruptions which all alliances, in all times, have experienced. Sensible of this momentous truth, you have improved upon your first essay, by the adoption of a constitution of government better calculated than your former for an intimate union, and for the efficacious management of your common concerns. This government, the offspring of our own choice uninfluenced and unawed, adopted upon full investigation and mature deliberation, completely free in its principles, in the distribution of its powers uniting security with energy, and containing within itself a provision for its own amendment, has a just claim to your confidence and your support. Respect for its authority, compliance with its laws, acquiescence in its measures, are duties enjoined by the fundamental maxims of true liberty. The basis of our political systems is the right of the people to make and to alter their constitutions of government.—But the constitution which at any time exists, until changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole people, is sacredly obligatory upon all. The very idea of the power and the right of the people to establish government, presupposes the duty of every individual to obey the established government.

"All obstructions to the execution of the laws, all combinations and associations under whatever plausible character, with the real design to direct, control, counteract or awe the regular deliberations and action of the constituted authorities, are destructive of this fundamental principle, and of fatal tendency.—They serve to organize faction, to give it an artificial and extraordinary force, to put in the place of the delegated will of the nation the will of party, often a small but artful and enterprising minority of the community; and, according to the alternate triumphs of different parties, to make the public administration the mirror of the ill concerted and incongruous projects of faction, rather than the organ of consistent and wholesome plans digested by common councils, and modified by mutual interests.

"However combinations or associations of the above descriptions may now and then answer popular ends, they are likely in the course of time and things, to become potent engines, by which cunning, ambitious, and unprincipled men, will be enabled to subvert the power of the people, and to usurp for themselves the reins of government; destroying afterwards the very engines which have lifted them to unjust dominion.

"Towards the preservation of your government and the permanency of your present happy state, it is requisite, not only that you steadily discountenance irregular oppositions to its acknowledged authority, but also that you resist with care the spirit of innovation upon its principles, however specious the pretext. One method of assault may be to effect, in the forms of the constitution, alterations which will impair the energy of the system; and thus to undermine what can not be directly overthrown. In all the changes to which you may be invited, remember that time and habit are at least as necessary to fix the true character of governments, as of other human institutions:—that experience is the surest standard by which to test the real tendency of the existing constitution of a country:—that facility in changes, upon the credit of mere hypothesis and opinion, exposes to perpetual change from the endless variety of hypothesis and opinion: and remember, especially, that for the efficient management of your common interests, in a country so extensive as ours, a government of as much vigour as is consistent with the perfect security of liberty is indispensable. Liberty itself will find in such a government, with powers properly distributed and adjusted, its surest guardian. It is, indeed, little else than a name, where the government is too feeble to withstand the enterprises of faction, to confine each member of the society within the limits prescribed by the laws, and to maintain all in the secure and tranquil enjoyment of the rights of person and property.

"I have already intimated to you the danger of parties in the state, with particular references to the founding them on geographical discriminations. Let me now take a more comprehensive view, and warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of the spirit of party generally.

"This spirit, unfortunately, is inseparable from our nature, having its root in the strongest passions of the human mind.—It exists under different shapes in all governments, more or less stifled, controlled, or repressed; but in those of the popular form, it is seen in its greatest rankness, and is truly their worst enemy.

"The alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge natural to party dissension, which, in different ages and countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism.—But this leads at length to a more formal and permanent despotism. The disorders and miseries which result, gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power of an individual; and, sooner or later, the chief of some prevailing faction, more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation on the ruins of public liberty.

"Without looking forward to an extremity of this kind, (which nevertheless ought not to be entirely out of sight,) the common and continual mischiefs of the spirit of party, are sufficient to make it the interest and duty of a wise people to discourage and restrain it.

"It serves always to distract the public councils, and enfeeble the public administration. It agitates the community with ill founded jealousies and false alarms; kindles the animosity of one part against another; foments occasional riot and insurrection. It opens the door to foreign influence and corruption, which finds a facilitated access to the government itself through the channels of party passions. Thus the policy and the will of one country are subjected to the policy and will of another.

"There is an opinion that parties in free countries are useful checks upon the administration of the government, and serve to keep alive the spirit of liberty. This, within certain limits, is probably true; and, in governments of a monarchical cast, patriotism may look with indulgence, if not with favour, upon the spirit of party. But in those of the popular character, in governments purely elective, it is a spirit not to be encouraged. From their natural tendency, it is certain there will always be enough of that spirit for every salutary purpose. And there being constant danger of excess, the effort ought to be, by force of public opinion, to mitigate and assuage it. A fire not to be quenched, it demands a uniform vigilance to prevent it bursting into a flame, lest, instead of warming, it should consume.

"It is important likewise, that the habits of thinking in a free country should inspire caution in those intrusted with its administration, to confine themselves within their respective constitutional spheres, avoiding in the exercise of the powers of one department, to encroach upon another. The spirit of encroachment tends to consolidate the powers of all the departments in one, and thus to create, whatever the form of government, a real despotism. A just estimate of that love of power and proneness to abuse it which predominate in the human heart, is sufficient to satisfy us of the truth of this position. The necessity of reciprocal checks in the exercise of political power, by dividing and distributing it into different depositories, and constituting each the guardian of the public weal against invasions of the others, has been evinced by experiments ancient and modern: some of them in our country, and under our own eyes.—To preserve them must be as necessary as to institute them. If, in the opinion of the people, the distribution or modification of the constitutional powers be in any particular wrong, let it be corrected by an amendment in the way which the constitution designates.—But let there be no change by usurpation; for though this, in one instance, may be the instrument of good, it is the customary weapon by which free governments are destroyed. The precedent must always greatly overbalance in permanent evil, any partial or transient benefit which the use can at any time yield.

"Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labour to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them.—A volume could not trace all their connexions with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked, where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation *desert* the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect, that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

"It is substantially true, that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. The rule, indeed, extends with more or less force to every species of free government. Who that is a sincere friend to it can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabrick?

"Promote, then, as an object of primary importance, institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it should be enlightened.

"As a very important source of strength and security, cherish public credit. One method of preserving it is to use it as sparingly as possible, avoiding occasions of expense by cultivating peace, but remembering also, that timely disbursements, to prepare for danger, frequently prevent much greater disbursements to repel it; avoiding likewise the accumulation of debt, not only by shunning occasions of expense, but by vigorous exertions in time of peace, to discharge the debts which unavoidable wars may have occasioned, not ungenerously throwing upon posterity the burden which we ourselves ought to bear. The execution of these maxims belongs to your representatives, but it is necessary that public opinion should cooperate. To facilitate to them the performance of their duty, it is essential that you should practically bear in mind, that towards the payment of debts there must be revenue; that to have revenue, there must be taxes; that no taxes can be devised which are not more or less inconvenient and unpleasant; that the intrinsic embarrassment inseparable from the selection of the proper objects, (which is always a choice of difficulties,) ought to be a decisive motive for a candid construction of the conduct of the government in making it, and for a spirit of acquiescence in the measures for obtaining revenue, which the public exigencies may at any time dictate.

"Observe good faith and justice towards all nations; cultivate peace and harmony with all. Religion and morality enjoin this conduct; and can it be that good policy does not equally enjoin it? it will be worthy of a free, enlightened, and, at no distant period, a great nation, to give to mankind the magnanimous and too novel example of a people always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence. Who can doubt but, in the course of time and things, the fruits of such a plan would richly repay any temporary advantages which might be lost by a steady adherence to it; can it be that Providence has not connected the permanent felicity of a nation with its virtue? the experiment, at least, is recommended by every sentiment which ennobles human nature. Alas! is it rendered impossible by its vices?

"In the execution of such a plan, nothing is more essential than that permanent, inveterate antipathies against particular nations, and passionate attachments for others, should be excluded; and that, in place of them, just and amicable feelings towards all should be cultivated. The nation which indulges towards another an habitual hatred, or an habitual fondness, is in some degree a slave. It is a slave to its animosity or to its affection, either of which is sufficient to lead it astray from its duty and its interest. Antipathy in one nation against another, disposes each more readily to offer insult and injury, to lay hold of slight causes of umbrage, and to be haughty and intractable when accidental or trifling occasions of dispute occur. Hence, frequent collisions, obstinate, envenomed, and bloody contests. The nation, prompted by ill will and resentment, sometimes impels to war the government, contrary to the best calculations of policy. The government sometimes participates in the national propensity, and adopts through passion what reason would reject; at other times, it makes the animosity of the nation subservient to projects of hostility, instigated by pride, ambition, and other sinister and pernicious motives.—The peace often, sometimes perhaps the liberty of nations has been the victim.

"So likewise, a passionate attachment of one nation for another produces a variety of evils. Sympathy for the favourite nation, facilitating the illusion of an imaginary common interest in cases where no real common interest exists, and infusing into one the enmities of the other, betrays the former into a participation in the quarrels and wars of the latter, without adequate inducements or justification. It leads also to concessions to the favourite nation, of privileges denied to others, which is apt doubly to injure the nation making the concessions; by unnecessarily parting with what ought to have been retained; and by exciting jealousy, ill will, and a disposition to retaliate in the parties from whom equal privileges are withheld: and it gives to ambitious, corrupted or deluded citizens who devote themselves to the favourite nation, facility to betray or sacrifice the interests of their own country, without odium, sometimes even with popularity; gilding with the appearances of a virtuous sense of obligation, a commendable deference for public opinion, or a laudable zeal for public good, the base or foolish compliances of ambition, corruption, or infatuation.

"As avenues to foreign influence in innumerable ways, such attachments are particularly alarming to the truly enlightened and independent patriot. How many opportunities do they afford to tamper with domestic factions, to practise the arts of seduction, to mislead public opinion, to influence or awe the public councils!—such an attachment of a small or weak, towards a great and powerful nation, dooms the former to be the satellite of the latter.

"Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence, (I conjure you to believe me, fellow citizens) the jealousy of a free people ought to be *constantly* awake; since history and experience prove, that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of republican government. But that jealousy, to be useful must be impartial; else it becomes the instrument of the very influence to be avoided, instead of a defence against it. Excessive partiality for one foreign nation, and excessive dislike for another, cause those whom they actuate to see danger only on one side, and serve to veil and even second the arts of influence on the other. Real patriots, who may resist the intrigues of the favourite, are liable to become suspected and odious; while its tools and dupes usurp the applause and confidence of the people, to surrender their interests.

"The great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign nations, is, in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little *political* connexion as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements, let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith.—Here, let us stop.

"Europe has a set of primary interests, which to us have none, or a very remote relation. Hence, she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns.—Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves, by artificial ties, in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities.

"Our detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course. If we remain one people, under an efficient government, the period is not far off when we may defy material injury from external annoyance; when we may take such an attitude as will cause the neutrality we may at any time resolve upon, to be scrupulously respected; when belligerent nations, under the impossibility of making acquisitions upon us, will not lightly hazard the giving us provocation; when we may choose peace or war, as our interest, guided by justice, shall counsel.

"Why forego the advantages of so peculiar a situation? why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground? why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalship, interest, humour, or caprice?

"It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world; so far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it; for let me not be understood as capable of patronizing infidelity to existing engagements. I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs, that honesty is always the best policy. I repeat it, therefore, let those engagements be observed in their genuine sense. But in my opinion, it is unnecessary, and would be unwise to extend them.

"Taking care always to keep ourselves, by suitable establishments, on a respectable defensive posture, we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies.

"Harmony, and a liberal intercourse with all nations, are recommended by policy, humanity, and interest. But even our commercial policy should hold an equal and impartial hand; neither seeking nor granting exclusive favours or preferences; consulting the natural course of things; diffusing and deversifying by gentle means the streams of commerce, but forcing nothing; establishing with powers so disposed, in order to give trade a stable course, to define the rights of our merchants, and to enable the government to support them, conventional rules of intercourse, the best that present circumstances and mutual opinion will permit, but temporary, and liable to be from time to time abandoned or varied as experience and circumstances shall dictate, constantly keeping in view, that it is folly in one nation to look for disinterested favours from another; that it must pay with a portion of its independence for whatever it may accept under that character; that by such acceptance, it may place itself in the condition of having given equivalents for nominal favours, and yet of being reproached with ingratitude for not giving more. There can be no greater error than to expect, or calculate upon real favours from nation to nation. It is an illusion which experience must cure, which a just pride ought to discard.

"In offering to you, my countrymen, these counsels of an old and affectionate friend, I dare not hope they will make the strong and lasting impression I could wish; that they will control the usual current of the passions; or prevent our nation from running the course which has hitherto marked the destiny of nations; but if I may even flatter myself, that they may be productive of some partial benefit, some occasional good; that they may now and then recur to moderate the fury of party spirit, to warn against the mischiefs of foreign intrigue, to guard against the impostures of pretended patriotism; this hope will be a full recompense for the solicitude for your welfare by which they have been dictated.

"How far, in the discharge of my official duties, I have been guided by the principles which have been delineated, the public records and other evidences of my conduct must witness to you and to the world. To myself, the assurance of my own conscience is, that I have, at least, believed myself to be guided by them.

"In relation to the still subsisting war in Europe, my proclamation of the 22d of April 1793 is the index to my plan. Sanctioned by your approving voice, and by that of your representatives in both houses of congress; the spirit of that measure has continually governed me; uninfluenced by any attempts to deter or divert me from it.

"After deliberate examination, with the aid of the best lights I could obtain, I was well satisfied that our country, under all the circumstances of the case, had a right to take, and was bound, in duty and interest, to take a neutral position. —Having taken it, I determined, as far as should depend upon me, to maintain it with moderation, perseverance, and firmness.

"The considerations which respect the right to hold this conduct, it is not necessary on this occasion to detail.—I will only observe that, according to my understanding of the matter, that right, so far from being denied by any of the belligerent powers, has been virtually admitted by all.

"The duty of holding a neutral conduct may be inferred, without any thing more, from the obligation which justice and humanity impose on every nation, in cases in which it is free to act, to maintain inviolate the relations of peace and amity towards other nations.

"The inducements of interest for observing that conduct will best be referred to your own reflections and experience. With me, a predominant motive has been to endeavour to gain time to our country to settle and mature its yet recent institutions, and to progress, without interruption, to that degree of strength and consistency which is necessary to give it, humanly speaking, the command of its own fortunes.

"Though in reviewing the incidents of my administration, I am unconscious of intentional error; I am nevertheless too sensible of my defects not to think it probable that I may have committed many errors. Whatever they may be, I fervently beseech the Almighty to avert or mitigate the evils to which they may tend. I shall also carry with me the hope that my country will never cease to view them with indulgence; and that, after forty-five years of my life dedicated to its service, with an upright zeal, the faults of incompetent abilities will be consigned to oblivion, as myself must soon be to the mansions of rest.

"Relying on its kindness in this as in other things, and actuated by that fervent love towards it, which is so natural to a man who views in it the native soil of himself and his progenitors for several generations; I anticipate with pleasing expectation that retreat in which I promise myself to realize, without alloy, the sweet enjoyment of partaking, in the midst of my fellow citizens, the benign influence of good laws under a free government—the ever favourite object of my heart, and the happy reward, as I trust, of our mutual cares, labours, and dangers."

The sentiments of veneration with which this address was generally received, were manifested in almost every part of the union. Some of the state legislatures directed it to be inserted at large in their journals, and nearly all of them passed resolutions expressing their respect for the person of the President, their high sense of his exalted services, and the emotions with which they contemplated his retirement from office. Although the leaders of party might rejoice at this event, it produced solemn and anxious reflections in the great body even of those who belonged to the opposition.

The person in whom alone the voice of the people could be united having declined a re-election, the two great parties in America brought forward their respective chiefs; and every possible effort was made by each, to obtain the victory. Mr. John Adams and Mr. Thomas Pinckney, the late minister at London, were supported as President and Vice President by the federalists: the whole force of the opposite party was exerted in favour of Mr. Jefferson.

Motives of vast influence were added, on this occasion, to those which usually impel men in a struggle to retain or acquire power. The continuance or the change not only of those principles on which the internal affairs of the United States had been administered, but of the conduct which had been observed towards foreign nations, was believed to depend on the choice of a chief magistrate. By one party, the system pursued by the existing administration with regard to the belligerent powers, had been uniformly approved; by the other, it had been as uniformly condemned. In the contests therefore which preceded the choice of electors, the justice of the complaints which were made on the part of the French republic were minutely discussed, and the consequences which were to be apprehended from her resentment, or from yielding to her pretensions, were reciprocally urged as considerations entitled to great weight in the ensuing election.

In such a struggle, it was not to be expected that foreign powers could feel absolutely unconcerned. In November, while the parties were so balanced that neither scale could be perceived to preponderate, Mr. Adet addressed a letter to the secretary of state, in which he recapitulated the numerous complaints which had been urged by himself and his predecessors, against the government of the United States; and reproached that government, in terms of great asperity, with violating those treaties which had secured its independence, with ingratitude to France, and with partiality to England. These wrongs, which commenced with the "*insidious*" proclamation of neutrality, were said to be so aggravated by the treaty concluded with Great Britain, that Mr. Adet announced the orders of the Directory to suspend his ministerial functions with the federal government. "But the cause," he added, "which had so long restrained the just resentment of the executive Directory from bursting forth, now tempered its effects. The name of America, notwithstanding the wrongs of its government, still excited sweet emotions in the hearts of Frenchmen; and the executive Directory wished not to break with a people whom they love to salute with the appellation of a friend." This suspension of his functions therefore was not to be regarded "as a rupture between France and the United States, but as a mark of just discontent which was to last until the government of the United States returned to sentiments and to measures more conformable to the interests of the alliance, and to the sworn friendship between the two nations."

This letter was concluded in the following terms:

"Alas! Time has not yet demolished the fortifications with which the English roughened this country—nor those the Americans raised for their defence; their half rounded summits still appear in every quarter, amidst plains, on the tops of mountains. The traveller need not search for the ditch which served to encompass them; it is still open under his feet. Scattered ruins of houses laid waste, which the fire had partly respected, in order to leave monuments of British fury, are still to be found.—Men still exist, who can say, here a ferocious Englishman slaughtered my father; there my wife tore her bleeding daughter from the hands of an unbridled Englishman.—Alas! the soldiers who fell under the sword of the Britons are not yet reduced to dust: the labourer in turning up his field, still draws from the bosom of the earth their whitened bones; while the ploughman, with tears of tenderness and gratitude, still recollects that his fields, now covered with rich harvests, have been moistened with French blood. While every thing around the inhabitants of this country animates them to speak of the tyranny of Great Britain, and of the generosity of Frenchmen; when England has declared a war of death to that nation, to avenge herself for its having cemented with its blood the independence of the United States:—It was at this moment their government made a treaty of amity with their ancient tyrant, the implacable enemy of their ancient ally. Oh Americans covered with noble scars! Oh you who have so often flown to death and to victory with French soldiers! You who know those generous sentiments which distinguish the true warrior! whose hearts have always vibrated with those of your companions in arms! consult them to-day to know what they experience; recollect at the same time, that if magnanimous souls with liveliness resent an affront, they also know how to forget one. Let your government return to itself, and you will still find in Frenchmen faithful friends and generous allies."

As if to remove all doubts respecting the purpose for which this extraordinary letter was written, a copy was, on the day of its date, transmitted to a printer for publication.

Whatever motives might have impelled Mr. Adet to make this open and direct appeal to the American people, in the critical moment of their election of a chief magistrate, it does not appear, in any material degree, to have influenced that election. Many reflecting men, who had condemned the course of the administration, could not approve this interference in the internal affairs of the United States; and the opposite party, generally, resented it as an attempt to control the operations of the American people in the exercise of one of the highest acts of sovereignty, and to poison the fountain of their liberty and independence, by mingling foreign intrigue with their elections. Viewing it as a fulfilment of their most gloomy prognostics respecting the designs of France to establish an influence in the councils of America, they believed the best interests of their country to require that it should be defeated; and their exertions against the candidate Mr. Adet was understood to favour, were the more determined and the more vigorous.

On the 7th of December, while this dubious and ardently contested election was depending, the President, for the last time, met the national legislature in the senate chamber. His address on the occasion was comprehensive, temperate, and dignified. In presenting a full and clear view of the situation of the United States, and in recommending those great national measures, in the utility of which he felt a confidence, no personal considerations could induce the omission of those, to which open and extensive hostility had been avowed.

After congratulating congress on the internal situation of the United States, and on the progress of that humane system which had been adopted for the preservation of peace with their Indian neighbours; after stating the measures which had been taken in execution of the treaties with Great Britain, Spain, and Algiers, and the negotiations which were pending with Tunis and Tripoli; he proceeded to say:

"To an active external commerce, the protection of a naval force is indispensable—this is manifest with regard to wars in which a state is itself a party—but besides this, it is in our own experience, that the most sincere neutrality is not a sufficient guard against the depredations of nations at war. To secure respect to a neutral flag, requires a naval force, organized and ready to vindicate it from insult or aggression—this may even prevent the necessity of going to war, by discouraging belligerent powers from committing such violations of the rights of the neutral party, as may first or last, leave no other option. From the best information I have been able to obtain, it would seem as if our trade to the Mediterranean, without a protecting force, will always be insecure; and our citizens exposed to the calamities from which numbers of them have but just been relieved.

"These considerations invite the United States to look to the means, and to set about the gradual creation of a navy. The increasing progress of their navigation promises them, at no distant period, the requisite supply of seamen; and their means, in other respects, favour the undertaking. It is an encouragement likewise, that their particular situation will give weight, and influence, to a moderate naval force in their hands. Will it not then be adviseable, to begin without delay, to provide and lay up the materials for the building and equipping of ships of war; and to proceed in the work by degrees, in proportion as our resources shall render it practicable, without inconvenience; so that a future war of Europe may not find our commerce in the same unprotected state, in which it was found by the present?"

The speech next proceeded earnestly to recommend the establishment of national works for manufacturing such articles as were necessary for the defence of the country; and also of an institution which should grow up under the patronage of the public, and be devoted to the improvement of agriculture. The advantages of a military academy,[1] and of a national university, were also urged; and the necessity of augmenting the compensations to the officers of the United States, in various instances, was explicitly stated.

Adverting to the dissatisfaction which had been expressed by one of the great powers of Europe, the President said, "while in our external relations some serious inconveniences and embarrassments have been overcome, and others lessened, it is with much pain and deep regret I mention, that circumstances of a very unwelcome nature have lately occurred. Our trade has suffered, and is suffering extensive injuries in the West Indies from the cruisers and agents of the French republic; and communications have been received from its minister here, which indicate the danger of a further disturbance of our commerce by its authority; and which are, in other respects, far from agreeable.

"It has been my constant, sincere and earnest wish, in conformity with that of our nation, to maintain cordial harmony, and a perfectly friendly understanding with that republic. This wish remains unabated; and I shall persevere in the endeavour to fulfil it to the utmost extent of what shall be consistent with a just and indispensable regard to the rights and honour of our country; nor will I easily cease to cherish the expectation, that a spirit of justice, candour and friendship, on the part of the republic, will eventually ensure success.

"In pursuing this course, however, I can not forget what is due to the character of our government and nation; or to a full and entire confidence in the good sense, patriotism, self respect, and fortitude of my countrymen.

"I reserve for a special message, a more particular communication on this interesting subject."

The flourishing state of the revenue, the expectation that the system for the gradual extinction of the national debt would be completed at this session, the anxiety which he felt respecting the militia, were successively mentioned, and the speech was concluded in the following terms.

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[1] The constitutional power of congress to appropriate money to objects of the description here recommended was denied by the opposition.

"The situation in which I now stand, for the last time, in the midst of the representatives of the people of the United States, naturally recalls the period when the administration of the present form of government commenced; and I can not omit the occasion to congratulate you, and my country, on the success of the experiment; nor to repeat my fervent supplications to the Supreme Ruler of the universe, and sovereign arbiter of nations, that his providential care may still be extended to the United States;—that the virtue and happiness of the people may be preserved; and that the government, which they have instituted for the protection of their liberties, may be perpetual."

The answer of the senate embraced the various topics of the speech, and approved every sentiment it contained.

To a review of the prosperous situation of the interior of the United States, the senate subjoined—

"Whilst contemplating the causes that produce this auspicious result, we must acknowledge the excellence of the constitutional system, and the wisdom of the legislative provisions;—but we should be deficient in gratitude and justice, did we not attribute a great portion of these advantages, to the virtue, firmness, and talents of your administration; which have been conspicuously displayed, in the most trying times, and on the most critical occasions—it is therefore, with the sincerest regrets, that we now receive an official notification of your intentions to retire from the public employments of your country.

"When we review the various scenes of your public life, so long and so successfully devoted to the most arduous services, civil and military; as well during the struggles of the American revolution, as the convulsive periods of a recent date, we can not look forward to your retirement without our warmest affections, and most anxious regards, accompanying you; and without mingling with our fellow citizens at large, in the sincerest wishes for your personal happiness, that sensibility and attachment can express.

"The most effectual consolation that can offer for the loss we are about to sustain, arises from the animating reflection, that the influence of your example will extend to your successors, and the United States thus continue to enjoy an able, upright, and energetic administration."

In the house of representatives, a committe of five had been appointed to prepare a respectful answer to the speech, three of whom were friends to the administration. Knowing well that the several propositions it contained could not be noticed in detail, without occasioning a debate in which sentiments opposed to those of the address would be expressed, probably by a majority of the house; and hoping that the disposition would be general to avow in strong terms their attachment to the person and character of the President, the committee united in reporting an answer which, in general terms, promised due attention to the various subjects recommended to their consideration, but was full and explicit in the expression of attachment to himself, and of approbation of his administration.

But the unanimity which prevailed in the committee did not extend to the house.

After amplifying and strengthening the expressions of the report which stated the regrets of the house that any interruption should have taken place in the harmony which had subsisted between the United States and France, and modifying those which declared their hopes in the restoration of that affection which had formerly subsisted between the two republics, so as to avoid any implication that the rupture of that affection was exclusively ascribable to France, a motion was made by Mr. Giles to expunge from the answer the following paragraphs.

"When we advert to the internal situation of the United States, we deem it equally natural and becoming to compare the present period with that immediately antecedent to the operation of the government, and to contrast it with the calamities in which the state of war still involves several of the European nations, as the reflections deduced from both tend to justify, as well as to excite a warmer admiration of our free constitution, and to exalt our minds to a more fervent and grateful sense of piety towards Almighty God for the beneficence of his Providence, by which its administration has been hitherto so remarkably distinguished.

"And while we entertain a grateful conviction that your wise, firm, and patriotic administration has been signally conducive to the success of the present form of government, we can not forbear to express the deep sensations of regret with which we contemplate your intended retirement from office.

"As no other suitable occasion may occur, we can not suffer the present to pass without attempting to disclose some of the emotions which it can not fail to awaken.

"The gratitude and admiration of your countrymen are still drawn to the recollection of those resplendent virtues and talents which were so eminently instrumental to the achievement of the revolution, and of which that glorious event will ever be the memorial. Your obedience to the voice of duty and your country, when you quitted reluctantly, a second time, the retreat you had chosen, and first accepted the presidency, afforded a new proof of the devotedness of your zeal in its service, and an earnest of the patriotism and success which have characterized your administration. As the grateful confidence of the citizens in the virtues of their chief magistrate has essentially contributed to that success, we persuade ourselves that the millions whom we represent, participate with us in the anxious solicitude of the present occasion.

"Yet we can not be unmindful that your moderation and magnanimity, twice displayed by retiring from your exalted stations, afford examples no less rare and instructive to mankind than valuable to a republic.

"Although we are sensible that this event, of itself, completes the lustre of a character already conspicuously unrivalled by the coincidence of virtue, talents, success, and public estimation; yet we conceive we owe it to you, sir, and still more emphatically to ourselves and to our nation, (of the language of whose hearts we presume to think ourselves, at this moment, the faithful interpreters) to express the sentiments with which it is contemplated.

"The spectacle of a free and enlightened nation offering by its representatives the tribute of unfeigned approbation to its first citizen, however novel and interesting it may be, derives all its lustre (a lustre which accident or enthusiasm could not bestow, and which adulation would tarnish) from the transcendent merit, of which it is the voluntary testimony.

"May you long enjoy that liberty which is so dear to you, and to which your name will ever be so dear; may your own virtue and a nation's prayers obtain the happiest sunshine for the decline of your days, and the choicest of future blessings. For our country's sake; for the sake of republican liberty, it is our earnest wish that your example may be the guide of your successors; and thus, after being the ornament and safeguard of the present age, become the patrimony of our descendants."

In support of this motion, after urging the indelicacy of exulting over the misfortunes of others by contrasting our happiness with their misery, Mr. Giles said, that with respect to the wisdom[1] and firmness of the President, he differed in opinion from the answer; and though he might be singular, yet it being his opinion, he should not be afraid to avow it. He had not that grateful conviction there mentioned, and if he were to come there and express it, he should prove an inconsistent character. He should not go into a lengthy discussion on this point, but if they turned their eyes to our foreign relations, there would be found no reason to exult in the wisdom and firmness of the administration. He believed, on the contrary, that it was from a want of wisdom and firmness that we were brought into our present critical situation. If gentlemen had been satisfied with expressing their esteem of the patriotism and virtue of the President, they might have got a unanimous vote; but they could not suppose that gentlemen would so far forget self-respect as to join in the proposed adulation.

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[1] Some objection has been made to the accuracy of this speech, as reported in the Daily Advertiser. The author has therefore deemed it proper to make some extracts from the Aurora, the leading paper of that party, of which Mr. Giles was a conspicuous member.

Mr. Giles, after stating that "the want of wisdom and firmness" in the administration, "had conducted the affairs of the nation to a crisis which threatens greater calamities than any that has before occurred,"—remarks as follows:—"Another sentiment in the report he could not agree to. He did not regret the President's retiring from office. He hoped he would retire, and enjoy the happiness that awaited him in retirement. He believed it would more conduce to that happiness that he should retire than if he should remain in office. He believed the government of the United States, founded on the broad basis of the people, that they were competent to their own government, and the remaining of no man in office was necessary to the success of that government. The people would truly be in a calamitous situation, if one man were essential to the existence of the government. He was convinced that the United States produces a thousand citizens capable of filling the presidential chair, and he would trust to the discernment of the people for a proper choice. Though the voice of all America should declare the President's retiring as a calamity, he could not join in the declaration, because he did not conceive it a misfortune. He hoped the President would be happy in his retirement, and he hoped he would retire." He reverted again to that part of the report which declared the administration to have been wise and firm in its measures. "He had always disapproved," he repeated, "of the measures of that administration with respect to foreign relations, and many members of the house had also; he was therefore surprised that gentlemen should now come forward and wish him, in one breath, to disavow all his former opinions, without being previously convinced of having been in an error. For his own part, he conceived there was more cause than ever for adhering to his old opinion. The course of events had pointed out their propriety; and, if he was not much mistaken, a crisis was at hand which would confirm them. He wished, that while gentlemen were willing to compliment the President, they would have some respect for the feelings of others."—*Aurora, December 15th, 1796.*

Mr. Giles said he was one of those citizens who did not regret the President's retiring from office. He hoped he would retire to his country seat and enjoy all the happiness he could wish; and he believed he would enjoy more there than in his present situation. He believed the government of the United States would go on without him. The people were competent to their own government. What calamities would attend the United States if one man alone was essential to their government! He believed there were a thousand men in the United States who were capable of filling the presidential chair as well as it had been filled heretofore. And although a clamour had been raised in all parts of the United States, more or less, from apprehensions on the departure of the President from office, yet, not feeling these apprehensions himself, he was perfectly easy on the occasion. He wished the President as much happiness as any man; and hoping he would retire, he could not express any regrets at the event. And it would be extraordinary, if gentlemen whose names in the yeas and nays are found in opposition to certain prominent measures of the administration, should now come forward and approve those measures. This could not be expected. He, for his part, retained the same opinions he had always done with respect to those measures, nor should any influence under heaven prevent him from expressing that opinion—an expression of opinion in which he was confident, ere long, all America would concur.[1]

This motion was opposed with great earnestness by the party which had supported the administration. The advantages which had resulted from the constitution were said to be too obvious to be controverted; and it was maintained that a comparison of the present situation of the United States with its condition anterior to the adoption of that instrument, or with the condition of foreign powers, was natural and proper. This comparison was made not for the purposes of exultation, but of exciting just sentiments respecting their own conduct.

In reply to the observations respecting the President, it was said, that the whole course of his administration had demonstrated the correctness with which the terms "wisdom and firmness" were applied to it. Particular circumstances were stated in which these qualities had been preeminently displayed; but the general impression which facts had made on the public mind was considered as dispensing with the necessity of stating the particular facts themselves.

It might be true, they said, that there were many others who could fill with propriety and advantage the presidential chair, but no man could fill it who possessed, in an equal degree, the confidence of the people. The possession of this confidence enabled the chief magistrate to perform the duties of his office in a manner greatly conducive to the interests of the nation, and the loss of so valuable a public servant was certainly just cause of regret. With this sentiment, the feelings of the community fully accorded. In every part of the United States, the declarations of their constituents attested the regrets with which this event was contemplated by them. Those gentlemen who did not participate in these feelings, would have an opportunity to record their names with their opinions. But those who did participate in them ought not to be restrained from expressing them.

The motion to strike out was lost; after which the words "the spectacle of a whole nation, the freest and most enlightened in the world," were amended, so as to read, "the spectacle of a free and enlightened nation," and the answer was carried by a great majority.

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[1] Dunlap and Claypole's Daily Advertiser, December 16th, 1796.

Early in the session, the President communicated to congress in a special message, the complaints alleged by the representative of the French republic against the government of the United States. 1797. These complaints embracing most of the transactions of the legislative and executive departments, in relation to the belligerent powers, a particular and careful review of almost every act of the administration, which could effect those powers, became indispensable. The principal object for the mission of General Pinckney to Paris, having been to make full and fair explanations of the principles and conduct of the American government, this review was addressed to that minister. It presented a minute and comprehensive detail of all the points of controversy which had arisen between the two nations; and defended the measures which had been adopted in America, with a clearness, and a strength of argument, believed to be irresistible. To place the subject in a point of view, admitting of no possible misunderstanding, the secretary of state had annexed to his own full and demonstrative reasoning, documents; establishing the real fact in each particular case, and the correspondence relating to it.

This letter, with its accompanying documents, was laid before congress.

Those who read these valuable papers will not be surprised, that the President should have relied upon their efficacy in removing from the government of France, all impressions unfavourable to the fairness of intention which had influenced the conduct of the United States; and in effacing from the bosoms of the great body of the American people, all those unjust and injurious suspicions which had been entertained against their own administration. Should their immediate operation on the executive of France disappoint his hopes, he persuaded himself that he could not mistake their influence in America; and he felt the most entire conviction that the accusations against the United States would cease, with the evidence that those accusations were countenanced and supported by a great portion of the American people.

These documents were communicated to the public; but, unfortunately, their effect at home was not such as had been expected, and they were consequently inoperative abroad. The fury of political controversy seemed to sustain no diminution; and the American character continued to be degraded by reciprocal criminations, which the two great parties made upon each other, of being under a British, and a French influence.

The measures particularly recommended by the President in his speech, at the opening of the session, were not adopted; and neither the debates in Congress, nor the party publications with which the nation continued to be agitated, furnished reasonable ground for the hope, that the political intemperance which had prevailed from the establishment of the republican form of government in France, was about to be succeeded by a more conciliatory spirit.

The President contemplated with a degree of pleasure [1] seldom felt at the resignation of power, his approaching retirement to the delightful scenes of domestic and rural life.

It was impossible to be absolutely insensible to the bitter invectives, and malignant calumnies of which he had long been the object. Yet in one instance only, did he depart from the rule he had prescribed for his conduct regarding them. Apprehending permanent injury from the republication of certain spurious letters which have been already noticed, he, on the day which terminated his official character, addressed to the secretary of state the following letter.

"Dear Sir,

"At the conclusion of my public employments, I have thought it expedient to notice the publication of certain forged letters which first appeared in the year 1777, and were obtruded upon the public as mine. They are said by the editor to have been found in a small portmanteau that I had left in the care of my mulatto servant named Billy, who, it is pretended, was taken prisoner at Fort Lee, in 1776. The period when these letters were first printed will be recollected, and what were the impressions they were intended to produce on the public mind. It was then supposed to be of some consequence to strike at the integrity of the motives of the American Commander-in-chief, and to paint his inclinations as at variance with his professions and his duty—another crisis in the affairs of America having occurred, the same weapon has been resorted to, to wound my character and deceive the people.

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[1] See note, No. XXIII, at the end of the volume.

"The letters in question have the dates, addresses, and signatures here following:

New York, June 12th, 1776.
To Mr. Lund Washington, at Mount Vernon, Fairfax county, Virginia.
G. W.
June 18th, 1776.
To John Parke Custis, Esqr., at the Hon. Benedict Calvert's, Esqr., Mount Airy, Maryland,
G. W.
New York, July 8th, 1776.
To Mr. Lund Washington, Mount Vernon, Fairfax county, Virginia.
G. W.
New York, July 16th, 1776.
To Mr. Lund Washington.
G. W.
New York, July 15th, 1776.
To Mr. Lund Washington.
G. W.
New York, July 22d, 1776.
To Mr. Lund Washington.
G. W.
June 24th, 1776.
To Mrs. Washington.
G. W.

"At the time when these letters first appeared, it was notorious to the army immediately under my command, and particularly to the gentlemen attached to my person, that my mulatto man Billy had never been one moment in the power of the enemy. It is also a fact that no part of my baggage, or any of my attendants, were captured during the whole course of the war. These well known facts made it unnecessary, during the war, to call the public attention to the forgery by any express declaration of mine; and a firm reliance on my fellow citizens, and the abundant proofs they gave of their confidence in me, rendered it alike unnecessary to take any formal notice of the revival of the imposition, during my civil administration. But as I can not know how soon a more serious event may succeed to that which will this day take place, I have thought it a duty that I owed to myself, to my country, and to truth, now to detail the circumstances above recited, and to add my solemn declaration that the letters herein described are a base forgery, and that I never saw or heard of them until they appeared in print. The present letter I commit to your care, and desire it may be deposited in the office of the department of state, as a testimony of the truth to the present generation and to posterity. Accept, &c. &c."

In February, the votes for the first and second magistrates of the union were opened and counted in presence of both houses; and the highest number appearing in favour of Mr. Adams, and the second in favour of Mr. Jefferson, the first was declared to be the President, and the second the Vice President, of the United States, for four years to commence on the fourth day of the ensuing March.

On that day, the members of the senate, conducted by the Vice President, together with the officers of the general and state governments, and an immense concourse of citizens, convened in the hall of the house of representatives, in which the oaths were administered to the President.

The sensibility which was manifested when General Washington entered, did not surpass the cheerfulness which overspread his own countenance, nor the heartfelt pleasure with which he saw another invested with the powers that had so long been exercised by himself.[1]

After the solemnities of the occasion had been concluded, and he had paid to his successor those respectful compliments which he believed to be equally due to the man and to the office, he hastened[2] to that real felicity which awaited him at Mount Vernon, the enjoyment of which he had long impatiently anticipated.

The same marks of respect and affection for his person, which had on all great occasions been manifested by his fellow citizens, still attended him. His endeavours to render his journey private were unavailing; and the gentlemen of the country through which he passed, were still ambitious of testifying their sentiments for the man who had, from the birth of the republic, been deemed the first of American citizens. Long after his retirement, he continued to receive addresses from legislative bodies, and various classes of citizens, expressive of the high sense entertained of his services.

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[1] See note, No. XXIV, at the end of the volume.

[2] See note, No. XXV, at the end of the volume.

Notwithstanding the extraordinary popularity of the first President of the United States, scarcely has any important act of his administration escaped the most bitter invective.

On the real wisdom of the system which he pursued, every reader will decide for himself. Time will, in some measure, dissipate the prejudices and passions of the moment, and enable us to view objects through a medium which represents them truly.

Without taking a full review of measures which were reprobated by one party and applauded by the other, the reader may be requested to glance his eye at the situation of the United States in 1797, and to contrast it with their condition in 1788.

At home, a sound credit had been created; an immense floating debt had been funded in a manner perfectly satisfactory to the creditors: an ample revenue had been provided; those difficulties which a system of internal taxation, on its first introduction, is doomed to encounter, were completely removed; and the authority of the government was firmly established. Funds for the gradual payment of the debt had been provided; a considerable part of it had been actually discharged; and that system which is now operating its entire extinction, had been matured and adopted. The agricultural and commercial wealth of the nation had increased beyond all former example. The numerous tribes of warlike Indians, inhabiting those immense tracts which lie between the then cultivated country and the Mississippi, had been taught, by arms and by justice, to respect the United States, and to continue in peace. This desirable object having been accomplished, that humane system was established for civilizing, and furnishing them with the conveniences of life, which improve their condition, while it secures their attachment.

Abroad, the differences with Spain had been accommodated; and the free navigation of the Mississippi had been acquired, with the use of New Orleans as a place of deposit for three years, and afterwards, until some other equivalent place should be designated. Those causes of mutual exasperation which had threatened to involve the United States in a war with the greatest maritime and commercial power in the world, had been removed; and the military posts which had been occupied within their territory, from their existence as a nation, had been evacuated. Treaties had been formed with Algiers and with Tripoli, and no captures appear to have been made by Tunis; so that the Mediterranean was opened to American vessels.

This bright prospect was indeed, in part, shaded by the discontents of France. Those who have attended to the particular points of difference between the two nations, will assign the causes to which these discontents are to be ascribed, and will judge whether it was in the power of the President to have avoided them, without surrendering the real independence of the nation, and the most invaluable of all rights—the right of self government.

Such was the situation of the United States at the close of Washington's administration. Their circumstances at its commencement will be recollected; and the contrast is too striking not to be observed.

That this beneficial change in the affairs of America is to be ascribed exclusively to the wisdom which guided the national councils will not be pretended. That many of the causes which produced it originated with the government, and that their successful operation was facilitated, if not secured, by the system which was adopted, will scarcely be denied. To estimate that system correctly, their real influence must be allowed to those strong prejudices, and turbulent passions, with which it was assailed.

Accustomed in the early part of his life to agricultural pursuits, and possessing a real taste for them, General Washington was particularly well qualified to enjoy, in retirement, that tranquil felicity which he had anticipated. Resuming former habits, and returning to ancient and well known employments, he was familiar with his new situation, and therefore exempt from the danger of that disappointment which is the common lot of those who, in old age, retire from the toils of business, or the cares of office, to the untried pleasures of the country. A large estate, which exhibited many proofs of having been long deprived of the attentions of its proprietor, in the management and improvement of which he engaged with ardour, an extensive correspondence, and the society of men and books, gave employment to every hour which was equally innocent and interesting, and furnished ground for the hope that the evening of a life which had been devoted to the public service, would be as serene, as its mid-day had been brilliant.

Though devoted to these occupations, an absolute indifference to public affairs would have been incompatible with that love of country which had influenced all his conduct. Feeling strong impressions in favour of that system, with regard to foreign powers, which had been adopted by himself, and which was faithfully pursued by his successor, he could not be inattentive to the immense, and continued exertions, made by a powerful party to overturn it. Yet for a time, he sought to abstract himself from these political contests, and to diminish the interest which his feelings impelled him to take in them. His letters abound in paragraphs not unlike the following. "I have confidence however in that Providence which has shielded the United States from the evils that have hitherto threatened them; and, as I believe the major part of the people of this country to be well affected to its constitution and government, I rest satisfied that, should a crisis ever arise to call forth the sense of the community, it will be strong in support of the honour and dignity of the nation. Therefore, however much I regret the opposition which has for its object the embarrassment of the administration, I shall view things in the 'calm light of mild philosophy,' and endeavour to finish my course in retirement and ease."

But the designs of France were soon manifested in a form which, to the veteran soldier and statesman of Mount Vernon, appeared to be too dangerous as well as unequivocal, to admit the preservation of this equanimity.

In the executive of that republic, General Pinckney encountered dispositions of a very different character from that amicable and conciliatory temper which had dictated his mission. After inspecting his letter of credence, the directory announced to him their haughty determination "not to receive another minister plenipotentiary from the United States, until after the redress of grievances demanded of the American government, which the French republic had a right to expect from it." This message was succeeded, first by indecorous verbal communications, calculated to force the American minister out of France, and afterwards, by a written mandate to quit the territories of the republic.

This act of hostility was accompanied with another which would explain the motives for this conduct, if previous measures had not rendered all further explanation unnecessary.

On giving to the recalled minister his audience of leave, the President of the directory addressed a speech to him, in which terms of outrage to the government, were mingled with expressions of affection for the people of the United States; and the expectation of ruling the former, by their influence over the latter, was too clearly manifested not to be understood. To complete this system of hostility, American vessels were captured wherever found; and, under the pretext of their wanting a document, with which the treaty of commerce had been uniformly understood to dispense, they were condemned as prize.

This serious state of things demanded a solemn consideration. On receiving from General Pinckney the despatches which communicated it, the President issued his proclamation requiring congress to meet on the 15th day of May. The firm and dignified speech delivered by the chief magistrate at the commencement of the session, exhibited that sensibility which a high minded and real American might be expected to feel, while representing to the national legislature the great and unprovoked outrages of a foreign government. Adverting to the audience of leave given by the executive directory to Colonel Monroe, he said, "the speech of the president discloses sentiments more alarming than the refusal of a minister, because more dangerous to our independence and union; and, at the same time, studiously marked with indignities towards the government of the United States. It evinces a disposition to separate the people from their government; to persuade them that they have different affections, principles, and interests from those of their fellow citizens whom they themselves have chosen to manage their common concerns; and thus to produce divisions fatal to our peace. Such attempts ought to be repelled with a decision which shall convince France, and the world, that we are not a degraded people, humiliated under a colonial spirit of fear, and sense of inferiority, fitted to be the miserable instruments of foreign influence, and regardless of national honour, character, and interest."

"Retaining still the desire which had uniformly been manifested by the American government to preserve peace and friendship with all nations, and believing that neither the honour nor the interest of the United States absolutely forbade the repetition of advances for securing these desirable objects with France, he should," he said, "institute a fresh attempt at negotiation, and should not fail to promote and accelerate an accommodation on terms compatible with the rights, duties, interests, and honour of the nation." But while he should be making these endeavours to adjust all differences with the French republic by amicable negotiation, he earnestly recommended it to congress to provide effectual measures of defence.

To carry into effect the pacific dispositions avowed in the speech, three envoys extraordinary were appointed, at the head of whom General Pinckney was placed. Their instructions conformed to the public language of the President. Peace and reconciliation were to be pursued by all means, compatible with the honour and the faith of the United States; but no national engagements were to be impaired; no innovation to be permitted upon those internal regulations for the preservation of peace which had been deliberately and uprightly established; nor were the rights of the government to be surrendered.

The debates in the house of representatives, on the answer to the speech, were long and earnest. To expressions approving the conduct of the executive with regard to foreign nations, the opposition was ardent, but unsuccessful. On the third of June, an answer was agreed to which contained sentiments worthy of an American legislature, and for which several of the leaders of the opposition voted.

The speech of the President was well adapted to the occasion, and to the times. It was calculated to rouse those indignant feelings which a high spirited people, insulted and injured by a foreign power, can never fail to display, if their judgment be not blinded, or their sensibility to external wrongs blunted, by invincible prejudices. He relied principally on the manifestation of these feelings for the success of the negotiation; and on their real existence, for the defence of the national rights, should negotiation fail. His endeavours were not absolutely unsuccessful. Some impression was made on the mass of the people; but it was too slight to be productive of the advantages expected from it. The conduct of France was still openly defended; and the opinion, that the measures which had been adopted by the executive of the United States furnished that republic with just cause of war, was still publicly maintained, and indefatigably circulated. According to these opinions, America could entitle herself to peace, only by retracing the steps she had taken, and yielding to the demands of her justly offended but generous and magnanimous ally.

Still jealous for the honour, as well as confident of the importance, of his country, and retaining that full conviction respecting the propriety of its measures which had induced their adoption, General Washington could not repress the solicitude with which he contemplated passing events. His confidential letters disclose the strong feelings of his own bosom, but betray no apprehensions that the French government would press its present system to extremities. He firmly believed that the hostile attitude it had assumed was to be, exclusively, ascribed to the conduct of those Americans who had been the uniform advocates of all the pretensions of France, and who were said to be supported by a real majority of the people; and confidently expected that, under the old pretext of magnanimous forbearance, the executive directory would, slowly, and gradually, recede from its present system, so soon as the error in which it originated should become manifest. The opinion he had always entertained of the good sense and patriotism of his fellow citizens, silenced every doubt respecting the manner in which they would act, when their real situation should be perceived by themselves.

For a considerable length of time, no certain intelligence reached the United States respecting the negotiation at Paris. At length, in the winter of 1798, letters were received from the American envoys, indicating an unfavourable state of things; and, in the spring, despatches arrived which announced the total failure of the mission.

History will scarcely furnish the example of a nation, not absolutely degraded, which has received from a foreign power such open contumely, and undisguised insult, as were, on this occasion, suffered by the United States in the persons of their ministers.

It was insinuated that their being taken from the party[1] which had supported the measures of their own government furnished just cause of umbrage; and, under slight pretexts, the executive directory delayed to accredit them as the representatives of an independent nation. In this situation, they were assailed by persons, not indeed invested with formal authority, but exhibiting sufficient evidence of the source from which their powers were derived, who, in direct and explicit terms, demanded money from the United States as the condition which must precede, not only the reconciliation of America to France, but any negotiation on the differences between the two countries.

That an advance of money by a neutral to a belligerent power would be an obvious departure from neutrality, though an insuperable objection to this demand, did not constitute the most operative reason for repelling it. Such were the circumstances under which it was made, that it could not be acceded to without a surrender of the real independence of the United States; nor without being, in fact, the commencement of a system, the end of which it was impossible to foresee.

A decided negative was therefore given to the preliminary required by these inofficial agents; but they returned to the charge with wonderful perseverance, and used unwearied arts to work upon the fears of the American ministers for their country, and for themselves. The immense power of France was painted in glowing colours, the humiliation of the house of Austria was stated, and the conquest of Britain was confidently anticipated. In the friendship of France alone, it was said, could America look for safety; and the fate of Venice was held up to warn her of the danger which awaited those who incurred the displeasure of the great republic. The ministers were assured that, if they believed their conduct would be approved in the United States, they were mistaken. The means which the Directory possessed, in that country, to excite odium against them, were great, and would unquestionably be employed.

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[1] Two of them were of the party denominated federal; the third was arranged with the opposition.

This degrading intercourse was at length interrupted by the positive refusal of the envoys to hold any further communication with the persons employed in it.

Meanwhile, they urged the object of their mission with persevering but unavailing solicitude. The Directory still refused to acknowledge them in their public character; and the secretary of exterior relations, at unofficial visits which they made him, renewed the demand which his agents had unsuccessfully pressed.

Finding the objections to their reception in their official character insurmountable, the American ministers made a last effort to execute the duties assigned to them. In a letter addressed to the secretary of exterior relations, they entered at large into the explanations committed to them by their government, and illustrated, by a variety of facts, the uniform friendliness of its conduct to France.[1] Notwithstanding the failure of this effort, and their perfect conviction that all further attempts would be equally unavailing, they continued, with a passiveness which must search for its apology in their solicitude to demonstrate to the American people the real views of the French republic, to employ the only means in their power to avert the rupture which was threatened, and which appeared to be inevitable.

During these transactions, occasion was repeatedly taken to insult the American government; open war was continued to be waged by the cruisers of France on American commerce; and the flag of the United States was a sufficient justification for the capture and condemnation of any vessel over which it waved.

At length, when the demonstration became complete, that the resolution of the American envoys was not less fixed, than their conduct had been guarded and temperate, various attempts were made to induce two of them, voluntarily, to relinquish their station; on the failure of which, they were ordered to quit the territories of the republic. As if to aggravate this national insult, the third, who had been selected from that party which was said to be friendly to France, was permitted to remain, and was invited to resume the discussions which had been interrupted.

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[1] It is a remarkable fact, that the answer of the French minister to this letter, an answer which criminated the American government in bitter terms, was in the possession of a printer in Philadelphia who had uniformly supported the pretensions of that republic, before it reached the American government.

The despatches communicating these events were laid before congress, and were afterwards published. The indignation which they excited was warm and extensive. The attempt to degrade the United States into a tributary nation was too obvious to be concealed; and the resentment produced, as well by this attempt as by the threats which accompanied it, was not confined to the federalists. For the moment, a spirit was roused on which an American may reflect with pride, and which he may consider as a sure protection from external danger. In every part of the continent, the favourite sentiment was "millions for defence, not a cent for tribute."

The disposition still existed to justify France, by criminating the American government, by contending that her intentions were not really hostile, that her conduct was misrepresented by men under British influence, who wished for war, or had been deceived by unauthorized intriguers; that, admitting it to be otherwise, she only demanded those marks of friendship which, at a critical moment, she had herself afforded; that the real interests of the United States required a compliance with this demand; that it would cost more money to resist than to yield to it; that the resistance would infallibly be ineffectual; and that national honour was never secured by national defeat. Neither these sentiments, nor the arguments which were founded on them, accorded with the general feeling; and it required the co-operation of other causes to establish the influence of those who urged them.

In congress, vigorous measures were adopted for retaliating injuries which had been sustained, and for repelling those which were threatened. Amongst these was a regular army. A regiment of artillerists and engineers was added to the permanent establishment; and the President was authorized to raise twelve additional regiments of infantry, and one regiment of cavalry, to serve during the continuance of the existing differences with the French republic if not sooner discharged. He was also authorized to appoint officers for a provisional army, and to receive and organize volunteer corps who should be exempt from ordinary militia duty; but neither the volunteers nor the officers of the provisional army were to receive pay unless called into actual service.

Addresses[1] to the executive from every part of the United States attested the high spirit of the nation, and the answers of the President were well calculated to give it solidity and duration.

No sooner had a war become probable, to the perils of which no man could be insensible, than the eyes of all were directed to General Washington, as the person who should command the American army. He alone could be seen at the head of a great military force without exciting jealousy; he alone could draw into public service, and arrange properly the best military talents of the nation; and he more than any other, could induce the utmost exertion of its physical strength.

Indignant at the unprovoked injuries which had been heaped upon his country, and convinced that the conflict, should a war be really prosecuted by France with a view to conquest, would be extremely severe, and could be supported, on the part of America, only by a persevering exertion of all her force, he could not determine, should such a crisis arrive, to withhold those aids which it might be in his power to afford, should public opinion really attach to his services that importance which would render them essential. His own reflections appear to have resulted in a determination not to refuse once more to take the field, provided he could be permitted to secure efficient aid by naming the chief officers of the army, and to remain at home until his service in the field should be required by actual invasion.

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[1] Having heard that the President contemplated a tour as far south as the district of Columbia, General Washington invited him to Mount Vernon, and concluded his letter with saying: "I pray you to believe that no one has read the various approbatory addresses which have been presented to you with more heartfelt satisfaction than I have done, nor are there any who more sincerely wish that your administration of the government may be easy, happy and honourable to yourself, and prosperous to the country."

A confidential and interesting letter from Colonel Hamilton of the 19th of May, on political subjects, concludes with saying, "you ought also to be aware, my dear sir, that in the event of an open rupture with France, the public voice will again call you to command the armies of your country; and though all who are attached to you will from attachment as well as public considerations, deplore an occasion which should once more tear you from that repose to which you have so good a right; yet it is the opinion of all those with whom I converse that you will be compelled to make the sacrifice. All your past labours may demand, to give them efficacy, this further, this very great sacrifice."

"You may be assured," said General Washington in reply, "that my mind is deeply impressed with the present situation of public affairs, and not a little agitated by the outrageous conduct of France towards the United States, and at the inimitable conduct of those partisans who aid and abet her measures. You may believe further, from assurances equally sincere, that if there was any thing in my power to be done consistently, to avert or lessen the danger of the crisis, it should be rendered with hand and heart.

"But, my dear sir, dark as matters appear at present, and expedient as it is to be prepared for the worst that can happen, (and no man is more disposed to this measure than I am) I can not make up my mind yet, for the expectation of open war; or, in other words, for a formidable invasion by France. I can not believe, although I think her capable of any thing, that she will attempt to do more than she has done. When she perceives the spirit and policy of this country rising into resistance, and that she has falsely calculated upon support from a large part of the people[1] to promote her views and influence in it, she will desist ever from those practices, unless unexpected events in Europe, or the acquisition of Louisiana and the Floridas, should induce her to continue them. And I believe further, that although the leaders of their party in this country will not change their sentiments, they will be obliged to change their plan, or the mode of carrying it on. The effervescence which is appearing in all quarters, and the desertion of their followers, will frown them into silence—at least for a while.

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[1] See note, No. XXVI, at the end of the volume.

"If I did not view things in this light, my mind would be infinitely more disquieted than it is: for, if a crisis should arrive when a sense of duty, or a call from my country should become so imperious as to leave me no choice, I should prepare for relinquishment, and go with as much reluctance from my present peaceful abode, as I should go to the tombs of my ancestors."

The opinion that prudence required preparations for open war, and that General Washington must once more be placed at the head of the American armies, strengthened every day; and on the 22d of June, the President addressed him a letter in which that subject was thus alluded to.

"In forming an army, whenever I must come to that extremity, I am at an immense loss whether to call out the old generals, or to appoint a young set. If the French come here, we must learn to march with a quick step, and to attack, for in that way only they are said to be vulnerable. I must tax you, sometimes, for advice. We must have your name, if you will in any case permit us to use it. There will be more efficacy in it than in many an army."

A letter from the secretary of war, written four days afterwards, concludes with asking, "may we flatter ourselves that, in a crisis so awful and important, you will accept the command of all our armies? I hope you will, because you alone can unite all hearts and all hands, if it is possible that they can be united."

These letters reached General Washington on the same day. The following extract from his reply to the President will exhibit the course of his reflections relative to his appearance once more at the head of the American armies.

"At the epoch of my retirement, an invasion of these states by any European power, or even the probability of such an event in my days, was so far from being contemplated by me, that I had no conception either that or any other occurrence would arise in so short a period which could turn my eyes from the shades of Mount Vernon. But this seems to be the age of wonders. And it is reserved for intoxicated and lawless France (for purposes of Providence far beyond the reach of human ken) to slaughter her own citizens, and to disturb the repose of all the world besides. From a view of the past,—from the prospect of the present,—and of that which seems to be expected, it is not easy for me to decide satisfactorily on the part it might best become me to act. In case of actual invasion by a formidable force, I certainly should not intrench myself under the cover of age and retirement, if my services should be required by my country to assist in repelling it. And if there be good cause to expect such an event, which certainly must be better known to the government than to private citizens, delay in preparing for it may be dangerous, improper, and not to be justified by prudence. The uncertainty however of the latter, in my mind, creates my embarrassment; for I can not bring it to believe, regardless as the French are of treaties, and of the laws of nations, and capable as I conceive them to be of any species of despotism and injustice, that they will attempt to invade this country after such a uniform and unequivocal expression of the determination of the people in all parts to oppose them with their lives and fortunes. That they have been led to believe by their agents and partisans among us that we are a divided people, that the latter are opposed to their own government, and that the show of a small force would occasion a revolt, I have no doubt; and how far these men (grown desperate) will further attempt to deceive, and may succeed in keeping up the deception, is problematical. Without that, the folly of the Directory in such an attempt would, I conceive, be more conspicuous, if possible, than their wickedness.

"Having with candour made this disclosure of the state of my mind, it remains only for me to add, that to those who knew me best, it is best known that, should imperious circumstances induce me to exchange once more the smooth paths of retirement for the thorny ways of public life, at a period too when repose is more congenial to nature, it would be productive of sensations which can be more easily conceived than expressed."

His letter to the secretary of war was more detailed and more explicit. "It can not," he said, "be necessary for me to premise to you or to others who know my sentiments, that to quit the tranquillity of retirement, and enter the boundless field of responsibility, would be productive of sensations which a better pen than I possess would find it difficult to describe. Nevertheless, the principle by which my conduct has been actuated through life, would not suffer me, in any great emergency, to withhold any services I could render when required by my country;—especially in a case where its dearest rights are assailed by lawless ambition and intoxicated power, in contempt of every principle of justice, and in violation of solemn compact, and of laws which govern all civilized nations:—and this too with the obvious intent to sow thick the seeds of disunion for the purpose of subjugating our government, and destroying our independence and happiness.

"Under circumstances like these, accompanied by an actual invasion of our territory, it would be difficult for me, at any time, to remain an idle spectator, under the plea of age or retirement. With sorrow, it is true, I should quit the shades of my peaceful abode, and the ease and happiness I now enjoy, to encounter anew the turmoils of war, to which, possibly, my strength and powers might be found incompetent. These, however, should not be stumbling blocks in my own way. But there are other things highly important for me to ascertain and settle before I could give a definitive answer to your question.

"1st. The propriety in the opinion of the public, so far as that opinion has been expressed in conversation, of my appearing again on the public theatre, after declaring the sentiments I did in my valedictory address of September, 1796.

2dly. A conviction in my own breast, from the best information that can be obtained, that it is the wish of my country that its military force should be committed to my charge; and,

3dly. That the army now to be formed should be so appointed as to afford a well grounded hope of its doing honour to the country, and credit to him who commands it in the field.

"On each of these heads you must allow me to make observations."

General Washington then proceeded to detail his sentiments on those points on which his consent to take command of the army must depend.

Some casual circumstances delayed the reception of the letters of the President and secretary of war for several days, in consequence of which, before the answer of General Washington reached the seat of government, the President had nominated him to the chief command of all the armies raised or to be raised in the United States, with the rank of Lieutenant General; and the senate had unanimously advised and consented to his appointment.

By the secretary of war, who was directed to wait upon him with his commission, the President addressed to him the following letter:

"Mr. M'Henry, the secretary of war, will have the honour to wait on you in my behalf, to impart to you a step I have ventured to take, which I should have been happy to have communicated in person, had such a journey, at this time, been in my power.

"My reasons for this measure will be too well known to need any explanation to the public. Every friend and every enemy of America will comprehend them at first blush. To you, sir, I owe all the apology I can make. The urgent necessity I am in of your advice and assistance, indeed of your conduct and direction of the war, is all I can urge; and that is a sufficient justification to myself and to the world. I hope it will be so considered by yourself. Mr. M'Henry will have the honour to consult you upon the organization of the army, and upon every thing relating to it."

Open instructions, signed by the President, were on the same day delivered to the secretary of war, of which the following is a copy:

"It is my desire that you embrace the first opportunity to set out on your journey to Mount Vernon, and wait on General Washington with the commission of Lieutenant General and Commander-in-chief of the armies of the United States, which, by the advice and consent of the senate, has been signed by me.

"The reasons and motives which prevailed on me to venture on such a step as the nomination of this great and illustrious character, whose voluntary resignation alone occasioned my introduction to the office I now hold, were too numerous to be detailed in this letter, and are too obvious and important to escape the observation of any part of America or Europe. But as it is a movement of great delicacy, it will require all your address to communicate the subject in a manner that shall be inoffensive to his feelings, and consistent with all the respect that is due from me to him.

"If the General should decline the appointment, all the world will be silent, and respectfully acquiesce. If he should accept it, all the world, except the enemies of his country, will rejoice. If he should come to no decisive determination, but take the subject into consideration, I shall not appoint any other lieutenant general until his conclusion is known.

"His advice in the formation of a list of officers would be extremely desirable to me. The names of Lincoln, Morgan, Knox, Hamilton, Gates, Pinckney, Lee, Carrington, Hand, Muhlenberg, Dayton, Burr, Brooks, Cobb, Smith, as well as the present Commander-in-chief, may be mentioned to him, and any others that occur to you. Particularly, I wish to have his opinion on the men most suitable for inspector general, adjutant general, and quarter master general.

"His opinion on all subjects would have great weight, and I wish you to obtain from him as much of his reflections upon the times and the service as you can."

The communications between General Washington and the secretary of war appear to have been full and unreserved. The impressions of the former respecting the critical and perilous situation of his country had previously determined him to yield to the general desire, and accept the commission offered him, provided he could be permitted to select for the high departments of the army, and especially for the military staff, those in whom he could place the greatest confidence. Being assured that there was every reason to believe his wishes in this respect would not be thwarted, he gave to the secretary the arrangement[1] which he would recommend for the principal stations in the army; and, on the 13th of July, addressed the following letter to the President.

"I had the honour, on the evening of the 11th instant, to receive from the hands of the secretary at war, your favour of the seventh, announcing that you had, with the advice and consent of the senate, appointed me Lieutenant General and Commander-in-chief of the armies raised or to be raised for the service of the United States.

"I can not express how greatly affected I am at this new proof of public confidence, and at the highly flattering manner in which you have been pleased to make the communication. At the same time, I must not conceal from you my earnest wish that the choice had fallen upon a man less declined in years, and better qualified to encounter the usual vicissitudes of war.

"You know, sir, what calculations I had made relative to the probable course of events on my retiring from office, and the determination, with which I had consoled myself, of closing the remnant of my days in my present peaceful abode. You will therefore be at no loss to conceive and appreciate the sensations I must have experienced, to bring my mind to any conclusion that would pledge me, at so late a period of life, to leave scenes I sincerely love, to enter upon the boundless field of public action, incessant trouble, and high responsibility.

"It was not possible for me to remain ignorant of, or indifferent to recent transactions. The conduct of the directory of France towards our country; their insidious hostility to its government; their various practices to withdraw the affections of the people from it; the evident tendency of their arts, and those of their agents, to countenance and invigorate opposition; their disregard of solemn treaties and the laws of nations; their war upon our defenceless commerce; their treatment of our ministers of peace; and their demands, amounting to tribute, could not fail to excite in me sentiments corresponding with those my countrymen have so generally expressed in their affectionate addresses to you.

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[1] *The following is the list of generals, and of the military staff.*

Alexander Hamilton, *Inspector.*
Charles C. Pinckney,
Henry Knox, or, if either refuses } Major Generals.
Henry Lee.
Henry Lee (if not Major General)
John Brooks,
William S. Smith, or } Brigadiers.
John E. Howard.
Edward Hand, or
Jonathan Dayton, or } Adjutant General.
William S. Smith.
Edward Carrington, Quarter Master General.
James Craik, Director of the Hospital.

"Believe me, sir, no man can more cordially approve the wise and prudent measures of your administration. They ought to inspire universal confidence, and will no doubt, combined with the state of things, call from congress such laws and means as will enable you to meet the full force and extent of the crisis.

"Satisfied, therefore, that you have sincerely wished and endeavoured to avert war, and exhausted to the last drop the cup of reconciliation, we can, with pure hearts, appeal to heaven for the justice of our cause, and may confidently trust the final result to that kind Providence who has heretofore, and so often, signally favoured the people of the United States.

"Thinking in this manner, and feeling how incumbent it is upon every person of every description to contribute, at all times, to his country's welfare, and especially in a moment like the present, when every thing we hold dear and sacred is so seriously threatened, I have finally determined to accept the commission of Commander-in-chief of the armies of the United States, with the reserve only,—that I shall not be called into the field until the army is in a situation to require my presence, or it becomes indispensable by the urgency of circumstances.

"In making this reservation, I beg it to be understood that I do not mean to withhold any assistance to arrange and organize the army, which you may think I can afford. I take the liberty also to mention that I must decline having my acceptance considered as drawing after it any immediate charge upon the public, or that I can receive any emoluments annexed to the appointment before I am in a situation to incur expense."

From this period, General Washington intermingled the cares and attentions of office with his agricultural pursuits. His solicitude respecting the organization of an army which he might possibly be required to lead against an enemy the most formidable in the world, was too strong to admit of his being inattentive to its arrangements. Yet he never did believe that an invasion of the United States would actually take place. His conviction that it was not the interest of France to wage an unprovoked war with America, and that the hostile measures which the executive directory had adopted originated in the opinion that those measures would overthrow the administration, and place power in the hands of those who had uniformly supported all the pretensions of the French republic, remained unshaken. As a necessary consequence of this conviction, he was persuaded that the indignation which this system had excited, would effect its change. The only circumstance that weakened this hope, arose from the persevering opposition which was still maintained in congress, and from the evidence which was daily afforded that those party animosities, to which he ascribed the present dangerous crisis, were far from being healed. Those who had embraced the cause of France in the controversy between that nation and the United States, had been overwhelmed by a flood of testimony which silenced them for a time, but which weakened them more in appearance than in reality. They were visibly recovering both strength and confidence. It is not therefore wonderful that General Washington should have expressed himself more freely than had been his custom, respecting American parties, and that he should have exerted an influence which he had not been in the habit of employing, to induce men whose talents he respected, but who had declined political life, to enter into the national and state legislatures.

Events soon demonstrated that he had not calculated unreasonably on the effects of the spirit manifested by his country. Although America, supplicating for peace, had been spurned with contempt; although the executive directory had rejected with insult her repeated and sincere prayers to be permitted to make explanations, and had haughtily demanded a concession of their arrogant and unfounded claims, or the advance of pecuniary aids, as a preliminary to negotiation;—America, in arms, was treated with some respect. Indirect pacific overtures were made, and a willingness on the part of France, to accommodate the existing differences on reasonable terms, was communicated.

The President, truly solicitous to restore that harmony and good understanding which the United States had laboured so incessantly and so sincerely to preserve with their ancient ally, caught at the overtures which were indirectly made, and again appointed three envoys extraordinary and ministers plenipotentiary to the French republic. These gentlemen found the government in the hands of a person who had taken no part in those transactions which had embroiled the two countries, and who entered into negotiations with them which terminated in the amicable adjustment of differences.

1799.

General Washington did not live to witness the restoration of peace.

On Friday the 13th of December, while attending to some improvements upon his estate, he was exposed to a light rain, by which his neck and hair became wet. Not apprehending danger from this circumstance, he passed the afternoon in his usual manner; but, in the night, was seized with an inflammatory affection of the windpipe. The disease commenced with a violent ague, accompanied with some pain in the upper and fore part of the throat, a sense of stricture in the same part, a cough, and a difficult rather than a painful deglutition, which were soon succeeded by fever, and a quick and laborious respiration.

Believing bloodletting to be necessary, he procured a bleeder who took from his arm twelve or fourteen ounces of blood, but he would not permit a messenger to be despatched for his family physician until the appearance of day. About eleven in the morning doctor Craik arrived; and perceiving the extreme danger of the case, requested that two consulting physicians should be immediately sent for. The utmost exertions of medical skill were applied in vain. The powers of life were manifestly yielding to the force of the disorder; speaking, which was painful from the beginning, became almost impracticable: respiration became more and more contracted and imperfect, until half past eleven on Saturday night; when, retaining the full possession of his intellect, he expired without a struggle.

Believing at the commencement of his complaint, as well as through every succeeding stage of it, that its conclusion would be mortal, he submitted to the exertions made for his recovery, rather as a duty, than from any expectation of their efficacy. Some hours before his death, after repeated efforts to be understood, he succeeded in expressing a desire that he might be permitted to die without interruption. After it became impossible to get any thing down his throat, he undressed himself and went to bed, there to die. To his friend and physician, doctor Craik, who sat on his bed, and took his head in his lap, he said with difficulty, "doctor, I am dying, and have been dying for a long time, but I am not afraid to die."

During the short period of his illness he economised his time, in arranging with the utmost serenity those few concerns which required his attention; and anticipated his approaching dissolution with every demonstration of that equanimity, for which his life was so uniformly, and singularly, conspicuous.

The deep and wide spreading grief occasioned by this melancholy event, assembled a great concourse of people for the purpose of paying the last tribute of respect to the first of Americans. His body, attended by military honours and the ceremonies of religion, was deposited in the family vault at Mount Vernon, on Wednesday, the 18th of December.

So short was his illness that, at the seat of government, the intelligence of his death preceded that of his indisposition. It was first communicated by a passenger in the stage to an acquaintance whom he met in the street, and the report quickly reached the house of representatives which was then in session. The utmost dismay and affliction was displayed for a few minutes; after which a member stated in his place, the melancholy information which had been received. This information he said was not certain, but there was too much reason to believe it true. "After receiving intelligence," he added, "of a national calamity so heavy and afflicting, the house of representatives can be but ill fitted for public business." He therefore moved an adjournment. Both houses adjourned until the next day.

On the succeeding day, as soon as the orders were read, the same member addressed the chair in the following terms:

"The melancholy event which was yesterday announced with doubt, has been rendered but too certain. Our WASHINGTON is no more! the hero, the patriot, and the sage of America;—the man on whom, in times of danger, every eye was turned, and all hopes were placed,—lives now only in his own great actions, and in the hearts of an affectionate and afflicted people.

"If, sir, it had even not been usual openly to testify respect for the memory of those whom heaven has selected as its instruments for dispensing good to man, yet, such has been the uncommon worth, and such the extraordinary incidents which have marked the life of him whose loss we all deplore, that the whole American nation, impelled by the same feelings, would call, with one voice, for a public manifestation of that sorrow which is so deep and so universal.

"More than any other individual, and as much as to one individual was possible, has he contributed to found this our wide spreading empire, and to give to the western world independence and freedom.

"Having effected the great object for which he was placed at the head of our armies, we have seen him convert the sword into the ploughshare, and sink the soldier into the citizen.

"When the debility of our federal system had become manifest, and the bonds which connected this vast continent were dissolving, we have seen him the chief of those patriots who formed for us a constitution which, by preserving the union, will, I trust, substantiate and perpetuate those blessings which our revolution had promised to bestow.

"In obedience to the general voice of his country calling him to preside over a great people, we have seen him once more quit the retirement he loved, and, in a season more stormy and tempestuous than war itself, with calm and wise determination, pursue the true interests of the nation, and contribute, more than any other could contribute, to the establishment of that system of policy, which will, I trust, yet preserve our peace, our honour, and our independence.

"Having been twice unanimously chosen the chief magistrate of a free people, we have seen him, at a time when his re-election with universal suffrage could not be doubted, afford to the world a rare instance of moderation, by withdrawing from his high station to the peaceful walks of private life.

"However the public confidence may change, and the public affections fluctuate with respect to others, with respect to him, they have, in war and in peace, in public and in private life, been as steady as his own firm mind, and as constant as his own exalted virtues.

"Let us then, Mr. Speaker, pay the last tribute of respect and affection to our departed friend. Let the grand council of the nation display those sentiments which the nation feels. For this purpose I hold in my hand some resolutions which I take the liberty of offering to the house."

The resolutions,[1] after a preamble stating the death of General Washington, were in the following terms.

"Resolved, that this house will wait on the President in condolence of this mournful event.

"Resolved, that the speaker's chair be shrouded with black, and that the members and officers of the house wear black during the session.

"Resolved, that a committee, in conjunction with one from the senate, be appointed to consider on the most suitable manner of paying honour to the memory of the MAN, first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his fellow citizens."

Immediately after the passage of these resolutions, a written message was received from the President, accompanying a letter from Mr. Lear, which he said, "will inform you that it had pleased Divine Providence to remove from this life our excellent fellow citizen, GEORGE WASHINGTON, by the purity of his life, and a long series of services to his country, rendered illustrious through the world. It remains for an affectionate and grateful people, in whose hearts he can never die, to pay suitable honour to his memory."

To the speaker and members of the house of representatives who waited on him in pursuance of the resolution which has been mentioned, he expressed the same deep-felt and affectionate respect "for the most illustrious and beloved personage America had ever produced."

The senate, on this melancholy occasion, addressed to the President the following letter.

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[1] These resolutions were prepared by General Lee, who happening not to be in his place when the melancholy intelligence was received and first mentioned in the house placed them in the hands of the member who moved them.

"'The senate of the United States respectfully take leave, sir, to express to you their deep regret for the loss their country sustains in the death of General GEORGE WASHINGTON.

"'This event, so distressing to all our fellow citizens, must be peculiarly heavy to you who have long been associated with him in *deeds of patriotism.* Permit us, sir, to mingle our tears with yours. On this occasion it is manly to weep. To lose such a man, at such a crisis, is no common calamity to the world. Our country mourns a father. The Almighty disposer of human events has taken from us our greatest benefactor and ornament. It becomes us to submit with reverence, to HIM who 'maketh darkness his pavilion.'

"'With patriotic pride we review the life of our WASHINGTON, and compare him with those of other countries who have been pre-eminent in fame. Ancient and modern names are diminished before him. Greatness and guilt have too often been allied; but *his* fame is whiter than it is brilliant. The destroyers of nations stood abashed at the majesty of *his* virtues. It reproved the intemperance of their ambition, and darkened the splendour of victory. The scene is closed,—and we are no longer anxious lest misfortune should sully his glory; he has traveled on to the end of his journey, and carried with him an increasing weight of honour: he has deposited it safely where misfortune can not tarnish it; where malice can not blast it. Favoured of heaven, he departed without exhibiting the weakness of humanity; magnanimous in death, the darkness of the grave could not obscure his brightness.

"'Such was the man whom we deplore. Thanks to God, his glory is consummated. Washington yet lives on earth in his spotless example—his spirit is in heaven.

"'Let his countrymen consecrate the memory of the heroic general, the patriotic statesman, and the virtuous sage: let them teach their children never to forget that the fruits of his labours and his example *are their inheritance.*"

To this address the President returned the following answer. "'I receive, with the most respectful and affectionate sentiments, in this impressive address, the obliging expressions of your regret for the loss our country has sustained in the death of her most esteemed, beloved, and admired citizen.

"In the multitude of my thoughts and recollections on this melancholy event, you will permit me to say that I have seen him in the days of adversity, in some of the scenes of his deepest distress and most trying perplexities. I have also attended him in his highest elevation and most prosperous felicity, with uniform admiration of his wisdom, moderation and constancy.

"Among all our original associates in that memorable *league of this continent* in 1774, which first expressed the SOVEREIGN WILL OF A FREE NATION IN AMERICA, he was the only one remaining in the general government. Although with a constitution more enfeebled than his, at an age when he thought it necessary to prepare for retirement, I feel myself alone, bereaved of my last brother; yet I derive a strong consolation from the unanimous disposition which appears in all ages and classes to mingle their sorrows with mine on this common calamity to the world.

"The life of our WASHINGTON can not suffer by a comparison with those of other countries who have been most celebrated and exalted by fame. The attributes and decorations of *royalty* could only have served to eclipse the majesty of those virtues which made him, from being a modest *citizen*, a more resplendent luminary. Misfortune, had he lived, could hereafter have sullied his glory only with those superficial minds who, believing that characters and actions are marked by success alone, rarely deserve to enjoy it. *Malice* could never blast his honour, and *Envy* made him a singular exception to her universal rule. For himself, he had lived long enough to life and to glory:—for his fellow citizens, if their prayers could have been answered, he would have been immortal: for me, his departure is at a most unfortunate moment. Trusting, however, in the wise and righteous dominion of Providence over the passions of men, and the results of their councils and actions, as well as over their lives, nothing remains for me but *humble resignation*.

"His example is now complete; and it will teach wisdom and virtue to magistrates, citizens, and men, not only in the present age, but in future generations, as long as our history shall be read. If a Trajan found a Pliny, a Marcus Aurelius can never want biographers, eulogists, or historians."

The joint committee which had been appointed to devise the mode by which the nation should express its feelings on this melancholy occasion, reported the following resolutions:

"That a marble monument be erected by the United States at the city of Washington, and that the family of General Washington be requested to permit his body to be deposited under it; and that the monument be so designed as to commemorate the great events of his military and political life.

"That there be a funeral procession from congress hall to the German Lutheran church, in memory of General Washington, on Thursday, the 26th instant, and that an oration be prepared at the request of congress, to be delivered before both houses on that day; and that the president of the senate, and speaker of the house of representatives, be desired to request one of the members of congress to prepare and deliver the same.

"That it be recommended to the people of the United States to wear crape on the left arm as a mourning for thirty days.

"That the President of the United States be requested to direct a copy of these resolutions to be transmitted to Mrs. Washingon, assuring her of the profound respect congress will ever bear to her person and character, of their condolence on the late affecting dispensation of Providence, and entreating her assent to the interment of the remains of General Washington in the manner expressed in the first resolution.

"That the President be requested to issue his proclamation, notifying to the people throughout the United States the recommendation contained in the third resolution."

These resolutions passed both houses unanimously, and those which would admit of immediate execution were carried into effect. The whole nation appeared in mourning. The funeral procession was grand and solemn, and the eloquent oration, which was delivered on the occasion by General Lee, was heard with profound attention and with deep interest.

Throughout the United States, similar marks of affliction were exhibited. In every part of the continent funeral orations were delivered, and the best talents of the nation were devoted to an expression of the nation's grief.

To the letter of the President which transmitted to Mrs. Washington the resolutions of congress, and of which his secretary was the bearer, that lady answered, "taught by the great example which I have so long had before me, never to oppose my private wishes to the public will, I must consent to the request made by congress which you have had the goodness to transmit to me;—and in doing this, I need not, I can not say what a sacrifice of individual feeling I make to a sense of public duty."

The monument however has not been erected. That the great events of the political as well as military life of General Washington should be commemorated, could not be pleasing to those who had condemned, and who continued to condemn, the whole course of his administration. This resolution, although it passed unanimously, had many enemies. That party which had long constituted the opposition, and which, though the minority for the moment, nearly divided the house of representatives, declared its preference for the equestrian statue which had been voted by congress at the close of the war. The division between a statue and a monument was so nearly equal, that the session passed away without an appropriation for either. The public feeling soon subsided, and those who possessed the ascendancy over the public sentiment employed their influence to draw odium on the men who favoured a monument; to represent that measure as a part of a general system to waste the public money; and to impress the idea that the only proper monument to the memory of a meritorious citizen, was that which the people would erect in their affections.

General Washington was rather above the common size, his frame was robust, and his constitution vigorous—capable of enduring great fatigue, and requiring a considerable degree of exercise for the preservation of his health. His exterior created in the beholder the idea of strength, united with manly gracefulness.

His manners were rather reserved than free, though they partook nothing of that dryness, and sternness, which accompany reserve when carried to an extreme; and on all proper occasions, he could relax sufficiently to show how highly he was gratified by the charms of conversation, and the pleasures of society. His person and whole deportment exhibited an unaffected and indescribable dignity, unmingled with haughtiness of which all who approached him were sensible; and the attachment of those who possessed his friendship, and enjoyed his intimacy, was ardent, but always respectful.

His temper was humane, benevolent, and conciliatory; but there was a quickness in his sensibility to any thing apparently offensive, which experience had taught him to watch, and to correct.

In the management of his private affairs he exhibited an exact yet liberal economy. His funds were not prodigally wasted on capricious and ill examined schemes, nor refused to beneficial though costly improvements. They remained therefore competent to that expensive establishment which his reputation, added to a hospitable temper, had in some measure imposed upon him; and to those donations which real distress has a right to claim from opulence.

He made no pretensions to that vivacity which fascinates, or to that wit which dazzles, and frequently imposes on the understanding. More solid than brilliant, judgment, rather than genius, constituted the most prominent feature of his character.

Without making ostentatious professions of religion, he was a sincere believer in the Christian faith, and a truly devout man.

As a military man, he was brave, enterprising, and cautious. That malignity which was sought to strip him of all the higher qualities of a General, has conceded to him personal courage, and a firmness of resolution which neither dangers nor difficulties could shake. But candour will allow him other great and valuable endowments. If his military course does not abound with splendid achievements, it exhibits a series of judicious measures adapted to circumstances, which probably saved his country.

Placed, without having studied the theory, or been taught in the school of experience the practice of war, at the head of an undisciplined, ill organized multitude, which was impatient of the restraints, and unacquainted with the ordinary duties of a camp, without the aid of officers possessing those lights which the Commander-in-chief was yet to acquire, it would have been a miracle indeed had his conduct been absolutely faultless. But, possessing an energetic and distinguishing mind, on which the lessons of experience were never lost, his errors, if he committed any, were quickly repaired; and those measures which the state of things rendered most adviseable, were seldom, if ever, neglected. Inferior to his adversary in the numbers, in the equipment, and in the discipline of his troops, it is evidence of real merit that no great and decisive advantages were ever obtained over him, and that the opportunity to strike an important blow never passed away unused. He has been termed the American Fabius; but those who compare his actions with his means, will perceive at least as much of Marcellus as of Fabius, in his character. He could not have been more enterprising, without endangering the cause he defended, nor have put more to hazard, without incurring justly the imputation of rashness. Not relying upon those chances which sometimes give a favourable issue to attempts apparently desperate, his conduct was regulated by calculations made upon the capacities of his army, and the real situation of his country. When called a second time to command the armies of the United States, a change of circumstances had taken place, and he meditated a corresponding change of conduct. In modelling the army of 1798, he sought for men distinguished for their boldness of execution, not less than for their prudence in counsel, and contemplated a system of continued attack. "The enemy," said the General in his private letters, "must never be permitted to gain foothold on our shores."

In his civil administration, as in his military career, ample and repeated proofs were exhibited of that practical good sense, of that sound judgment, which is perhaps the most rare, and is certainly the most valuable quality of the human mind. Devoting himself to the duties of his station, and pursuing no object distinct from the public good, he was accustomed to contemplate at a distance those critical situations in which the United States might probably be placed; and to digest, before the occasion required action, the line of conduct which it would be proper to observe. Taught to distrust first impressions, he sought to acquire all the information which was attainable, and to hear, without prejudice, all the reasons which could be urged for or against a particular measure. His own judgment was suspended until it became necessary to determine; and his decisions, thus maturely made, were seldom if ever to be shaken. His conduct therefore was systematic, and the great objects of his administration were steadily pursued.

Respecting, as the first magistrate in a free government must ever do, the real and deliberate sentiments of the people, their gusts of passion passed over, without ruffling the smooth surface of his mind. Trusting to the reflecting good sense of the nation for approbation and support, he had the magnanimity to pursue its real interests, in opposition to its temporary prejudices; and, though far from being regardless of popular favour, he could never stoop to retain, by deserving to lose it. In more instances than one, we find him committing his whole popularity to hazard, and pursuing steadily, in opposition to a torrent which would have overwhelmed a man of ordinary firmness, that course which had been dictated by a sense of duty.

In speculation, he was a real republican, devoted to the constitution of his country, and to that system of equal political rights on which it is founded. But between a balanced republic and a democracy, the difference is like that between order and chaos. Real liberty, he thought, was to be preserved, only by preserving the authority of the laws, and maintaining the energy of government. Scarcely did society present two characters which, in his opinion, less resembled each other, than a patriot and a demagogue.

No man has ever appeared upon the theatre of public action, whose integrity was more incorruptible, or whose principles were more perfectly free from the contamination of those selfish and unworthy passions, which find their nourishment in the conflicts of party. Having no views which required concealment, his real and avowed motives were the same; and his whole correspondence does not furnish a single case, from which even an enemy would infer that he was capable, under any circumstances, of stooping to the employment of duplicity. No truth can be uttered with more confidence than that his ends were always upright, and his means always pure. He exhibits the rare example of a politician to whom wiles were absolutely unknown, and whose professions to foreign governments and to his own countrymen, were always sincere. In him was fully exemplified the real distinction, which forever exists, between wisdom and cunning, and the importance as well as truth of the maxim that "honesty is the best policy."

If Washington possessed ambition, that passion was, in his bosom, so regulated by principles, or controlled by circumstances, that it was neither vicious, nor turbulent. Intrigue was never employed as the means of its gratification, nor was personal aggrandizement its object. The various high and important stations to which he was called by the public voice, were unsought by himself; and, in consenting to fill them, he seems rather to have yielded to a general conviction that the interests of his country would be thereby promoted, than to an avidity for power.

Neither the extraordinary partiality of the American people, the extravagant praises which were bestowed upon him, nor the inveterate opposition and malignant calumnies which he encountered, had any visible influence upon his conduct. The cause is to be looked for in the texture of his mind.

In him, that innate and unassuming modesty which adulation would have offended, which the voluntary plaudits of millions could not betray into indiscretion, and which never obtruded upon others his claims to superior consideration, was happily blended with a high and correct sense of personal dignity, and with a just consciousness of that respect which is due to station. Without exertion, he could maintain the happy medium between that arrogance which wounds, and that facility which allows the office to be degraded in the person who fills it.

It is impossible to contemplate the great events which have occurred in the United States under the auspices of Washington, without ascribing them, in some measure, to him. If we ask the causes of the prosperous issue of a war, against the successful termination of which there were so many probabilities? of the good which was produced, and the ill which was avoided, during an administration fated to contend with the strongest prejudices, that a combination of circumstances, and of passions, could produce? of the constant favour of the great mass of his fellow citizens, and of the confidence which, to the last moment of his life, they reposed in him? the answer, so far as these causes may be found in his character, will furnish a lesson well meriting the attention of those who are candidates for political fame.

Endowed by nature with a sound judgment, and an accurate discriminating mind, he feared not that laborious attention which made him perfectly master of those subjects, in all their relations, on which he was to decide: and this essential quality was guided by an unvarying sense of moral right, which would tolerate the employment, only, of those means that would bear the most rigid examination; by a fairness of intention which neither sought nor required disguise: and by a purity of virtue which was not only untainted, but unsuspected.

NOTES

NOTE—No. I

THE following is an extract from the orders of the preceding day. "The Commander-in-chief orders the cessation of hostilities between the United States of America and the king of Great Britain to be publicly proclaimed to-morrow at twelve at the new building; and that the proclamation which will be communicated herewith, be read to-morrow evening at the head of every regiment, and corps of the army; after which the chaplains with the several brigades will render thanks to Almighty God for all his mercies, particularly for his overruling the wrath of man to his own glory, and causing the rage of war to cease among the nations.

"Although the proclamation before alluded to, extends only to the prohibition of hostilities and not to the annunciation of a general peace, yet it must afford the most rational and sincere satisfaction to every benevolent mind, as it puts a period to a long and doubtful contest, stops the effusion of human blood, opens the prospect to a more splendid scene, and like another morning star, promises the approach of a brighter day than hath hitherto illuminated the western hemisphere. On such a happy day, which is the harbinger of peace, a day which completes the eighth year of the war, it would be ingratitude not to rejoice; it would be insensibility not to participate in the general felicity.

"The Commander-in-chief, far from endeavouring to stifle the feelings of joy in his own bosom, offers his most cordial congratulations on the occasion to all the officers of every denomination, to all the troops of the United States in general, and in particular to those gallant and persevering men, who had resolved to defend the rights of their invaded country, so long as the war should continue. For these are the men who ought to be considered as the pride and boast of the American army; and who, crowned with well-earned laurels, may soon withdraw from the field of glory, to the more tranquil walks of civil life.

"While the general recollects the almost infinite variety of scenes through which we have passed with a mixture of pleasure, astonishment and gratitude; while he contemplates the prospect before us with rapture, he can not help wishing that all the brave men (of whatever condition they may be,) who have shared in the toils and dangers of effecting this glorious revolution, of rescuing millions from the hand of oppression, and of laying the foundation of a great empire, might be impressed with a proper idea of the dignified part they have been called to act (under the smiles of Providence) on the stage of human affairs. For happy, thrice happy shall they be pronounced hereafter, who have contributed any thing; who have performed the meanest office in erecting this stupendous *fabric of freedom* and empire on the broad basis of independency; who have assisted in protecting the rights of human nature, and establishing an asylum for the poor and oppressed of all nations and religions. The glorious task for which we first flew to arms being thus accomplished, the liberties of our country being fully acknowledged and firmly secured by the smiles of heaven, on the purity of our cause, and on the honest exertions of a feeble people determined to be free, against a powerful nation disposed to oppress them, and the character of those who have persevered through every extremity of hardship, suffering, and danger, being immortalized by the illustrious appellation of the *patriot army*, nothing now remains but for the actors of this mighty scene to preserve a perfect unvarying consistency of character through the very last act; to close the drama with applause, and to retire from the military theatre with the same approbation of angels and men which has crowned all their former virtuous actions. For this purpose, no disorder or licentiousness must be tolerated: every considerate and well disposed soldier must remember, it will be absolutely necessary to wait with patience until peace shall be declared, or congress shall be enabled to take proper measures for the security of the public stores, etc. As soon as these arrangements shall be made, the general is confident there will be no delay in discharging with every mark of distinction and honour all the men enlisted for the war who will then have faithfully performed their engagements with the public. The general has already interested himself in their behalf, and he thinks he need not repeat the assurances of his disposition to be useful to them on the present and every other proper occasion. In the mean time, he is determined that no military neglects or excesses shall go unpunished while he retains the command of the army."

NOTE—No. II

On his way, he stopped a few days at Philadelphia, for the purpose of settling his accounts with the comptroller. The following account of this part of his duty is extracted from Mr. Gordon; "while in the city he delivered in his accounts to the comptroller, down to December the 13th, all in his own hand writing, and every entry made in the most particular manner, stating the occasion of each charge, so as to give the least trouble in examining and comparing them with the vouchers with which they were attended.

"The heads as follows, copied from the folio manuscript paper book in the file of the treasury office, number 3700, being a black box of tin containing, under lock and key, both that and the vouchers."

Total of expenditures from 1775 to 1783, exclusive of provisions from commissaries and contractors, and of liquors, &c. from them and others,	3387	14	4
Secret intelligence and service,	1982	10	0
Spent in reconnoitring and travelling,	1874	8	8
Miscellaneous charges,	2952	10	1
Expended besides, dollars according to the scale of depreciation,	6114	14	0
	l. 16,311	17	1

"Two hundred guineas advanced to General M'Dougal are not included in the *l.* 1982 10 0 not being yet settled, but included in some of the other charges, and so reckoned in the general sum.

"Note; 104,364, of the dollars were received after March, 1780, and although credited at forty for one, many did not fetch at the rate of a hundred for one; while 27,775 of them are returned without deducting any thing from the above account (and, therefore, actually made a present of to the public.")

General Washington's account from June, 1775, to the end of June, 1783,	16311	17	1
Expenditure from July 1, 1783, to December 13,	1717	5	4
Added afterward from thence to December 28,	213	8	4
Mrs. Washington's travelling expenses in coming to the general and returning,	1064	1	0
	l. 19,306	11	9

Lawful money of Virginia, the same as Massachusetts, or sterling, *l.* 14,479 18 9 3-4

"The general entered in his book—"I find upon the final adjustment of these accounts, that I am a considerable loser, my disbursements falling a good deal short of my receipts, and the money I had upon hand of my own: for besides the sums I carried with me to Cambridge in 1775, I received monies afterwards on private account in 1777, and since, which (except small sums, that I had occasion now and then to apply to private uses) were all expended in the public service: through hurry, I suppose, and the perplexity of business, (for I know not how else to account for the deficiency) I have omitted to charge the same, whilst every debit against me is here credited." July 1st, 1783.

NOTE—No. III

The year 1784 had nearly passed away before the determination of the British cabinet not to evacuate the western posts was known to the government of the United States. In the spring of that year, General Knox, who commanded the troops still retained in the service of the United States, was directed to "open a correspondence with the Commander-in-chief of his Britannic majesty's forces in Canada, in order to ascertain the precise time when each of the posts within the territories of the United States then occupied by the British troops should be delivered up." The measures produced by this resolution exhibit a curious specimen of the political opinions on the subject of federal powers, which then prevailed in congress.

It being at that time believed that the British garrisons would certainly be withdrawn, it became necessary to provide for occupying the posts when surrendered, with troops belonging to the United States. A number deemed sufficient for the purpose not having been retained in service, a motion was made for raising seven hundred men, by requisitions on the states for that and other objects specified in the resolution. The power of congress to make these requisitions was seriously contested, and it was gravely urged that such a power, connected with the rights to borrow money, and to emit bills of credit, would be dangerous to liberty, and alarming to the states. The motion for raising this small number of regulars did not prevail; and an order was made that except twenty-five privates to guard the stores at fort Pitt, and fifty-five to guard those at West Point and other magazines, with a proportionable number of officers, no one to exceed the rank of captain, the troops already in service should be discharged, unless congress, before its recess, should dispose of them in some other manner. For the purpose of garrisoning the posts, seven hundred militia were required from Connecticut, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, who should serve twelve months. While the discussions on this subject were pending, instructions from the legislature of New York to their delegates were laid before congress, requesting that body in terms of great strength, in pursuance of the confederation, to declare the number of troops of which the garrisons of those posts which were within the limits of that state should consist. The resolutions asserted a constitutional right to demand from congress a declaration upon this point, and avowed a determination to raise the troops should such declaration be withheld. After the determination of the British government not to surrender the posts was known, the militia ordered to be raised to garrison them, who were not in actual service, were discharged.

NOTE—No. IV

In the formation of this treaty, a question came on to be considered and decided which involved a principle that on an after occasion, and in a different case, excited a ferment never to be forgotten by those who took an active part in the politics of the day.

The whole commerce of the Creek nation was in the hands of M'Gillivray, who received his supplies from a company of British merchants, free from duty, through the territories belonging to Spain. This circumstance constituted no inconsiderable impediment to the progress of the negotiation. M'Gillivray derived emoluments from the arrangement which he would not consent to relinquish; and was not without apprehensions, that Spain, disgusted by his new connexions with the United States, might throw embarrassments in the way of this profitable traffic. In addition to this consideration, it was, on the part of the United States, desirable to alter the channel through which the Indians should receive their supplies, and thereby to render them more dependent on the American government. But it would be necessary to exempt the goods designed for the Indian nation from the duties imposed by law on imported articles, and the propriety of such an exemption might well be questioned.

With that cautious circumspection which marked his political course, the president took this point into early consideration, and required the opinion of his constitutional advisers respecting it. The secretary of state was of opinion that the stipulation for importing his goods through the United States, duty free, might safely be made. "A treaty made by the president with the concurrence of two-thirds of the senate, was," he said, "a law of the land," and a law of superior order, because it not only repeals past laws, but can not itself be repealed by future ones. The treaty then will legally control the duty act, and the act for licensing traders in this particular instance. From this opinion there is no reason to suppose that any member of the cabinet dissented. A secret article providing for the case was submitted to the senate, and it has never been understood that in advising and consenting to it, that body was divided.

NOTE—No. V

This question was investigated with great labour, and being one involving principles of the utmost importance to the United States, on which the parties were divided, the subject was presented in all the views of which it was susceptible. A perusal of the arguments used on the occasion would certainly afford much gratification to the curious, and their insertion at full length would perhaps be excused by those who recollect the interest which at the time was taken in the measure to which they related, and the use which was made of it by the opponents of the then administration; but the limits prescribed for this work will not permit the introduction of such voluminous papers. It may however be expected that the outline of that train of reasoning with which each opinion was supported, and on which the judgment of the president was most probably formed, should be briefly stated.

To prove that the measure was not sanctioned by the constitution, the general principle was asserted, that the foundation of that instrument was laid on this ground, "that all powers not delegated to the United States by the constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states or to the people." To take a single step beyond the boundaries thus specially drawn around the powers of congress, is to take possession of a boundless field of power, no longer susceptible of definition.

The power in question was said not to be among those which were specially enumerated, nor to be included within either of the general phrases which are to be found in the constitution.

The article which contains this enumeration was reviewed; each specified power was analysed; and the creation of a corporate body was declared to be distinct from either of them.

The general phrases are,

1st. To lay taxes to provide for the general welfare of the United States. The power here conveyed, it was observed, was "to lay taxes," the purpose was "the general welfare." Congress could not lay taxes *adlibitum,* but could only lay them for the general welfare; nor did this clause authorize that body to provide for the general welfare otherwise than by laying taxes for that purpose.

2dly. To make all laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into execution the enumerated powers.

But they can all be carried into execution without a bank. A bank, therefore, is not necessary, and consequently not authorized by this phrase.

It had been much urged that a bank would give great facility or convenience in the collection of taxes. Suppose this were true; yet the constitution allows only the means which are necessary, not those which are convenient. If such a latitude of construction be allowed this phrase, as to give any non-enumerated power, it will go to every one; for there is no one which ingenuity may not torture into a *convenience, in some way or other, to some one* of so long a list of enumerated powers. It would swallow up all the list of enumerated powers, and reduce the whole to one phrase. Therefore it was that the constitution restrained them to *necessary* means, that is to say, to those means without which the grant of the power must be nugatory.

The convenience was then examined. This had been stated in the report of the secretary of the treasury to congress, to consist in the augmentation of the circulating medium, and in preventing the transportation and retransportation of money between the states and the treasury.

The first was considered as a demerit. The second, it was said, might be effected by other means. Bills of exchange and treasury drafts would supply the place of bank notes. Perhaps indeed bank bills would be a more convenient vehicle than treasury orders; but a little difference in the degree of convenience can not constitute the *necessity* which the constitution makes the ground for assuming any non-enumerated power.

Besides, the existing state banks would, without doubt, enter into arrangements for lending their agency. This expedient alone suffices to prevent the existence of that *necessity* which may justify the assumption of a non-enumerated power as a means for carrying into effect an enumerated one.

It may be said that a bank whose bills would have a currency all over the states, would be more convenient than one whose currency is limited to a single state. So it would be still more convenient that there should be a bank whose bills should have a currency all over the world; but it does not follow from this superior conveniency, that there exists any where a power to establish such a bank, or that the world may not go on very well without it.

For a shade or two of convenience, more or less, it can not be imagined that the constitution intended to invest congress with a power so important as that of erecting a corporation.

In supporting the constitutionality of the act, it was laid down as a general proposition, "that every power vested in a government is in its nature *sovereign,* and includes by *force* of the *term,* a right to employ all the *means* requisite and *fairly applicable to* the attainment of the *ends* of such power; and which are not precluded by restrictions and exceptions specified in the constitution, are not immoral, are not contrary to the essential ends of political society.

This principle, in its application to government in general, would be admitted as an axiom; and it would be incumbent on those who might refuse to acknowledge its influence in American affairs to *prove* a distinction; and to show that a rule which, in the general system of things, is essential to the preservation of the social order, is inapplicable to the United States.

The circumstance that the powers of sovereignty are divided between the national and state governments, does not afford the distinction required. It does not follow from this, that each of the portions of power delegated to the one or to the other, is not sovereign with regard to its *proper objects.* It will only follow from it, that each has sovereign power as to certain things, and not as to other things. If the government of the United States does not possess sovereign power as to its declared purposes and trusts, because its power does not extend to all cases, neither would the several states possess sovereign power in any case; for their powers do not extend to every case. According to the opinion intended to be combated, the United States would furnish the singular spectacle of a *political society* without *sovereignty,* or a people *governed* without a *government.*

If it could be necessary to bring proof of a proposition so clear as that which affirms that the powers of the federal government, *as to its objects,* were sovereign, there is a clause in the constitution which is decisive. It is that which declares the constitution of the United States, the laws made in pursuance of it, and the treaties made under its authority to be the supreme law of the land. The power which can create the supreme law in any case, is doubtless sovereign as to such case.

This general and indisputable principle puts an end to the abstract question, whether the United States have power to erect a corporation: for it is unquestionably incident to sovereign power to erect corporations, and consequently to that of the United States, in relation to the objects intrusted to the management of the government. The difference is this; where the authority of the government is general, it can create corporations *in all cases;* where it is confined to certain branches of legislation, it can create corporations only *in those cases.*

That the government of the United States can exercise only those powers which are delegated by the constitution, is a proposition not to be controverted; neither is it to be denied on the other hand, that there are implied as well as express powers, and that the former are as effectually delegated as the latter. For the sake of accuracy it may be observed, that there are also *resulting* powers. It will not be doubted that if the United States should make a conquest of any of the territories of its neighbours, they would possess sovereign jurisdiction over the conquered territory. This would rather be a result of the whole mass of the powers of the government, and from the nature of political society, than a consequence of either of the powers specially enumerated. This is an extensive case in which the power of erecting corporations is either implied in, or would result from some or all of the powers vested in the national government.

Since it must be conceded that implied powers are as completely delegated as those which are expressed, it follows that, as a power of erecting a corporation may as well be implied as any other thing, it may as well be employed as an *instrument* or *mean* of carrying into execution any of the specified powers as any other *instrument* or *mean* whatever. The question in this as in every other case must be, whether the mean to be employed has a natural relation to any of the acknowledged objects or lawful ends of the government. Thus a corporation may not be created by congress for superintending the police of the city of Philadelphia, because they are not authorized to regulate the police of that city; but one may be created in relation to the collection of the taxes, or to the trade with foreign countries, or between the states, or with the Indian tribes, because it is in the province of the federal government to regulate those objects; and because it is incident to a general sovereign or legislative power to regulate a thing, to employ all the means which relate to its regulation, to the best and greatest advantage.

A strange fallacy seems to have crept into the manner of thinking and reasoning upon this subject. The imagination has presented an incorporation as some great, *independent*, *substantive* thing—as a political end of peculiar magnitude and moment; whereas it is truly to be considered as a quality, capacity, or mean to an end. Thus a mercantile company is formed with a certain capital for the purpose of carrying on a particular branch of business. The business to be prosecuted is the *end.* The association in order to form the requisite capital is the primary *mean.* Let an incorporation be added, and you only add a new quality to that association which enables it to prosecute the business with more safety and convenience. The association when incorporated still remains the *mean,* and can not become the *end.*

To this reasoning respecting the inherent right of government to employ all the means requisite to the execution of its specified powers, it is objected, that none but *necessary* and *proper* means can be employed; and none can be *necessary,* but those without which the grant of the power would be nugatory. So far has this restrictive interpretation been pressed as to make the case of *necessity* which shall warrant the constitutional exercise of a power, to depend on casual and temporary circumstances; an idea, which alone confutes the construction. The expedience of exercising a particular power, at a particular time, must indeed depend on circumstances, but the constitutional right of exercising it must be uniform and invariable. All the arguments, therefore, drawn from the accidental existence of certain state banks which happen to exist to-day, and for aught that concerns the government of the United States may disappear to-morrow, must not only be rejected as fallacious, but must be viewed as demonstrative that there is a radical source of error in the reasoning.

But it is essential to the being of the government that so erroneous a conception of the meaning of the word *necessary* should be exploded.

It is certain that neither the grammatical nor popular sense of the term requires that construction. According to both, *necessary* often means no more than *needful, requisite, incidental, useful,* or *conducive to.* It is a common mode of expression to say that it is necessary for a government or a person to do this or that thing, where nothing more is intended or understood than that the interests of the government or person require, or will be promoted by doing this or that thing.

This is the true sense in which the word is used in the constitution. The whole turn of the clause containing it indicates an intent to give by it a liberal latitude to the exercise of the specified powers. The expressions have peculiar comprehensiveness. They are "to make *all laws* necessary and proper for carrying into execution the foregoing powers, and *all other* powers vested by the constitution in the government of the United States, or in any *department* or *office* thereof." To give the word "necessary" the restrictive operation contended for, would not only depart from its obvious and popular sense, but would give it the same force as if the word *absolutely* or *indispensably* had been prefixed to it.

Such a construction would beget endless uncertainty and embarrassment. The cases must be palpable and extreme in which it could be pronounced with certainty that a measure was absolutely necessary, or one without which a given power would be nugatory. There are few measures of any government which would stand so severe a test. To insist upon it would be to make the criterion of the exercise of an implied power *a case of extreme necessity;* which is rather a rule to justify the overleaping the bounds of constitutional authority than to govern the ordinary exercise of it.

The degree in which a measure is necessary can never be a test of the legal right to adopt it. The relation between the *measure* and the *end;* between the nature of the *mean* employed towards the execution of a power, and the object of that power must be the criterion of constitutionality, not the more or less *necessity* or *utility.*

The means by which national exigencies are to be provided for, national inconveniences obviated, and national prosperity promoted, are of such infinite variety, extent, and complexity, that here must of necessity be great latitude of discretion in the selection and application of those means. Hence the necessity and propriety of exercising the authority intrusted to a government on principles of liberal construction.

While on the one hand, the restrictive interpretation of the word *necessary* is deemed inadmissible, it will not be contended on the other, that the clause in question gives any new and independent power. But it gives an explicit sanction to the doctrine of implied powers, and is equivalent to an admission of the proposition that the government, *as to its specified powers and objects,* has plenary and sovereign authority.

It is true that the power to create corporations is not granted in terms. Neither is the power to pass any particular law, nor to employ any of the means by which the ends of the government are to be attained. It is not expressly given in cases in which its existence is not controverted. For by the grant of a power to exercise exclusive legislation in the territory which may be ceded by the states to the United States, it is admitted to pass; and in the power "to make all needful rules and regulations respecting the territory or other property of the United States," it is acknowledged to be implied. In virtue of this clause, has been implied the right to create a government; that is, to create a body politic or corporation of the highest nature; one that, in its maturity, will be able itself to create other corporations. Thus has the constitution itself refuted the argument which contends that, had it been designed to grant so important a power as that of erecting corporations, it would have been mentioned. But this argument is founded on an exaggerated and erroneous conception of the nature of the power. It is not of so transcendent a kind as the reasoning supposes. Viewed in a just light, it is a *mean* which ought to have been left to implication, rather than an *end* which ought to have been expres ly granted.

The power of the government then to create corporations in certain cases being shown, it remained to inquire into the right to incorporate a banking company, in order to enable it the more effectually to accomplish *ends* which were in themselves lawful.

To establish such a right it would be necessary to show the relation of such an institution to one or more of the specified powers of government.

It was then affirmed to have a relation more or less direct to the power of collecting taxes, to that of borrowing money, to that of regulating trade between the states, to those of raising, supporting, and maintaining fleets and armies; and in the last place to that which authorizes the making of all needful rules and regulations concerning the property of the United States, as the same had been practised upon by the government.

The secretary of the treasury next proceeded, by a great variety of arguments and illustrations, to prove the position that the measure in question was a proper mean for the execution of the several powers which were enumerated, and also contended that the right to employ it resulted from the whole of them taken together. To detail those arguments would occupy too much space, and is the less necessary, because their correctness obviously depends on the correctness of the principles which have been already stated.

NOTE—No. VI

The officer to whom the management of the finances was confided was so repeatedly charged with a desire to increase the public debt and to render it perpetual, and this charge had such important influence in the formation of parties, that an extract from this report can not be improperly introduced.

After stating the sum to be raised, the secretary says, "three expedients occur to the option of the government for providing this:

One, to dispose of the interest to which the United States are entitled in the bank of the United States. This at the present market price of bank stock would yield a clear gain to the government much more than adequate to the sum required.

Another, to borrow the money upon an establishment of funds either merely commensurate with the interest to be paid, or affording a surplus which will discharge the principal by instalments within a short term.

The third is to raise the amount by taxes.

After stating his objections to the first and second expedients, the report proceeds thus, "but the result of mature reflection is, in the mind of the secretary, a strong conviction that the last of the three expedients which have been mentioned, is to be preferred to either of the other two.

"Nothing can more interest the national credit and prosperity than a constant and systematic attention to husband all the means previously possessed for extinguishing the present debt, and to avoid, as much as possible, the incurring of any new debt.

"Necessity alone, therefore, can justify the application of any of the public property, other than the annual revenues, to the current service, or the temporary and casual exigencies; or the contracting of an additional debt by loans, to provide for those exigencies.

"Great emergencies indeed might exist, in which loans would be indispensable. But the occasions which will justify them must be truly of that description.

"The present is not of such a nature. The sum to be provided is not of magnitude enough to furnish the plea of necessity.

"Taxes are never welcome to a community. They seldom fail to excite uneasy sensations more or less extensive. Hence a too strong propensity in the governments of nations, to anticipate and mortgage the resources of posterity, rather than to encounter the inconveniencies of a present increase of taxes.

"But this policy, when not dictated by very peculiar circumstances, is of the worst kind. Its obvious tendency is, by enhancing the permanent burdens of the people, to produce lasting distress, and its natural issue is in national bankruptcy."

It will be happy if the councils of this country, sanctioned by the voice of an enlightened community, shall be able to pursue a different course.

NOTE—No. VII

About the same time a letter was addressed to the attorney general on the same subject. The following extract is taken from one of the twenty-sixth of August to the secretary of the treasury.

"Differences in political opinions are as unavoidable as, to a certain point, they may be necessary; but it is exceedingly to be regretted that subjects can not be discussed with temper, on the one hand, or decisions submitted to on the other, without improperly implicating the motives which led to them; and this regret borders on chagrin when we find that men of abilities, zealous patriots, having the same *general* objects in view, and the same upright intentions to prosecute them, will not exercise more charity in deciding on the opinions and actions of each other. When matters get to such lengths, the natural inference is that both sides have strained the cords beyond their bearing, that a middle course would be found the best until experience shall have decided on the right way; or, which is not to be expected, because it is denied to mortals, until there shall be some infallible rule by which to forejudge events.

"Having premised these things, I would fain hope that liberal allowances will be made for the political opinions of each other; and instead of those wounding suspicions, and irritating charges with which some of our gazettes are so strongly impregnated, and which can not fail, if persevered in, of pushing matters to extremity, and thereby tearing the machine asunder, that there might be mutual forbearance and temporising yieldings on *all sides*. Without these, I do not see how the reins of government are to be managed, or how the union of the states can be much longer preserved.

"How unfortunate would it be if a fabric so goodly, erected under so many providential circumstances, after acquiring in its first stages, so much respectability, should, from diversity of sentiment, or internal obstructions to some of the acts of government (for I can not prevail on myself to believe that these measures are as yet the acts of a determined party) be brought to the verge of dissolution. Melancholy thought! But while it shows the consequences of diversified opinions, where pushed with too much tenacity, it exhibits evidence also of the necessity of accommodation, and of the propriety of adopting such healing measures as may restore harmony to the discordant members of the union, and the governing powers of it.

"I do not mean to apply this advice to any measures which are passed, or to any particular character. I have given it, in the same *general* terms, to other officers of the government. My earnest wish is that balm may be poured into *all* the wounds which have been given, to prevent them from gangrening, and to avoid those fatal consequences which the community may sustain if it is withheld. The friends of the union must wish this: those who are not, but who wish to see it rended, will be disappointed; and all things I hope will go well."

NOTE—No. VIII

The gazettes of the day contain ample proofs on this subject. All the bitterness of party spirit had poured itself out in the most severe invectives against the heads of the state and treasury departments.

The secretary of the treasury was represented as the advocate of "aristocracy, monarchy, hereditary succession, a titled order of nobility, and all the other mock pageantry of kingly government." He was arraigned at the bar of the public for holding principles unfavourable to the sovereignty of the people, and with inculcating doctrines insinuating their inability to rule themselves. The theory of the British monarchy was said to have furnished his model for a perfect constitution; and all his systems of finance, which were represented as servile imitations of those previously adopted by England, were held up to public execration as being intended to promote the favourite project of assimilating the government of the United States to that of Great Britain. With this view, he had entailed upon the nation a heavy debt, and perpetual taxes; had created an artificial monied interest which had corrupted, and would continue to corrupt the legislature; and was endeavouring to prostrate the local authorities as a necessary step towards erecting that great consolidated monarchy which he contemplated.

To support some of these charges, sentences and parts of sentences were selected from his reports, which expressed the valuable purposes to which a funded debt might be applied, and were alleged to affirm, as an abstract principle, "that a public debt was a public blessing." He was, it was added, the inveterate enemy of Mr. Jefferson, because, in the republican principles of that gentleman, he perceived an invincible obstacle to his views.

If the counter charges exhibited against the secretary of state were less capable of alarming the fears of the public for liberty, and of directing the resentments of the people against that officer as the enemy of their rights, they were not less calculated to irritate his personal friends, and to wound his own feelings.

The adversaries of this gentleman said, that he had been originally hostile to the constitution of the United States, and adverse to its adoption; and "that his avowed opinions tended to national disunion, national insignificance, public disorder, and discredit." Under the garb of democratic simplicity, and modest retiring philosophy, he covered an inordinate ambition which grasped unceasingly at power, and sought to gratify itself, by professions of excessive attachment to liberty, and by traducing and lessening in the public esteem, every man in whom he could discern a rival. To this aspiring temper they ascribed, not only "those pestilent whispers which, clandestinely circulating through the country, had, as far as was practicable, contaminated some of its fairest and worthiest characters," but also certain publications affecting the reputation of prominent individuals whom he might consider as competitors with himself for the highest office in the state. A letter written by Mr. Jefferson to a printer, transmitting for publication the first part of "the rights of man," which letter was prefixed to the American edition of that pamphlet, contained allusions to certain "political heresies" of the day, which were understood to imply a serious censure on the opinions of the vice president: and the great object of the national gazette, a paper known to be edited by a clerk in the department of state, was "to calumniate and blacken public characters, and, particularly, to destroy the public confidence in the secretary of the treasury, who was to be hunted down for the unpardonable sin of having been the steady and invariable friend of broad principles of national government." It was also said that his connexions with this paper, and the patronage he afforded it, authorized the opinion that it might fairly be considered "the mirror of his views," and thence was adduced an accusation not less serious in its nature than that which has been already stated.

The national gazette was replete with continual and malignant strictures on the leading measures of the administration, especially those which were connected with the finances. "If Mr. Jefferson's opposition to these measures had ceased when they had received the sanction of law, nothing more could have been said than that he had transgressed the rules of official decorum in entering the lists with the head of another department, and had been culpable in pursuing a line of conduct which was calculated to sow the seeds of discord in the executive branch of the government in the infancy of its existence. But when his opposition extended beyond that point, when it was apparent that he wished to *render odious*, and of course to *subvert* (for in a popular government these are convertible terms) all those deliberate and solemn acts of the legislature which had become the pillars of the public credit, his conduct deserved to be regarded with a still severer eye." It was also said to be peculiarly unfit for a person remaining at the head of one of the great executive departments, openly to employ all his influence in exciting the public rage against the laws and the legislature of the union, and in giving circulation to calumnies against his colleagues in office, from the contamination of which the chief magistrate himself could not hope entirely to escape.

NOTE—No. IX

The following are copies of these interesting questions, and of the letter which enclosed them.

Philadelphia, 18th April, 1793.

"SIR,—The posture of affairs in Europe, particularly between France and Great Britain, place the United States in a delicate situation, and require much consideration of the measures which will be proper for them to observe in the war between those powers. With a view to forming a general plan of conduct for the executive, I have stated and enclosed sundry questions to be considered preparatory to a meeting at my house to-morrow, where I shall expect to see you at 9 o'clock, and to receive the result of your reflections thereon.

Ques. I. Shall a proclamation issue for the purpose of preventing interferences of the citizens of the United States in the war between France and Great Britain, &c.? shall it contain a declaration of neutrality or not? what shall it contain?

Ques. II. Shall a minister from the republic of France be received?

Ques. III. If received, shall it be absolutely or with qualifications; and if with qualifications, of what kind?

Ques. IV. Are the United States obliged by good faith to consider the treaties heretofore made with France as applying to the present situation of the parties? may they either renounce them or hold them suspended until the government of France shall be *established?*

Ques. V. If they have the right, is it expedient to do either? and which?

Ques. VI. If they have an option, would it be a breach of neutrality to consider the treaties still in operation.

Ques. VII. If the treaties are to be considered as now in operation, is the guarantee in the treaty of alliance applicable to a defensive war only, or to war, either offensive or defensive?

Ques. VIII. Does the war in which France is engaged appear to be offensive or defensive on her part? or of a mixed and equivocal character?

Ques. IX. If of a mixed and equivocal character, does the guarantee in any event apply to such a war?

Ques. X. What is the effect of a guarantee, such as that to be found in the treaty of alliance between the United States and France?

Ques. XI. Does any article in either of the treaties prevent ships of war, other than privateers, of the powers opposed to France, from coming into the ports of the United States to act as convoys to their own merchantmen? or does it lay any other restraints upon them more than would apply to the ships of war of France?

Ques. XII. Should the future regent of France send a minister to the United States, ought he to be received?

Ques. XIII. Is it necessary or adviseable to call together the two houses of congress with a view to the present posture of European affairs? if it is, what should be the particular objects of such a call?

NOTE—No. X

The official letter announcing to the convention the appointment of Mr. Genet, contained a communication of a very delicate nature, which was immediately made public. That the French government had not mingled with its desire to separate America from Britain, a willingness to see the United States acquire a degree of strength which might render them truly independent, and formidable to their neighbours, though well known to congress, had been concealed from the people at large. It seems, therefore, to have been apprehended by the leaders of the revolution in France, that some remnant of that affection which had been so lavishly expressed for their fallen monarch while exercising sovereign power, might still be cherished in the American bosom, and might obstruct the endeavours they were about to make to produce a more intimate connexion between the two nations. It might be supposed that such sentiments, if they existed, would be effectually destroyed by a disclosure of the motives which had influenced the conduct of those by whom the aids so highly valued had been granted. The letter alluded to contains this passage: "From the instructions that were given by the former ministry to the agents in that country (America) which the executive council caused to be laid before them, they have seen with indignation, that at the very time when the good people of America expressed to us their friendship and gratitude in the most affectionate manner, Vergennes and Montmorin thought, *that it was not suitable to France to give to America all the consistence of which it was capable, because it would acquire a strength which it might probably abuse.* They, therefore, enjoined on their agents a passive conduct in regard to that nation, and to speak of nothing but the personal views of the king for its prosperity. The operations of war were directed by the same Machiavelian maxims. The same duplicity was employed in the negotiations of peace; in which, when signed, the people for whom we had taken up arms were altogether neglected." The official letter brought by Mr. Genet, to the executive of the United States, conveyed in less explicit terms the same idea; and to prove the correctness of these allegations, he communicated copies of official documents expressing in plain terms the solicitude of France and Spain to exclude the United States from the Mississippi; their jealousies of the growing power and ambition of this country; and the wish of France, expressed while the question was pending, that the constitution might not be adopted, as it "suits France that the United States should remain in their present state, because if they should acquire the consistence of which they are susceptible, they would soon acquire a force or a power which they would be very ready to abuse." The minister of the king, however, was directed not to avow the inclination of his sovereign on this point.

NOTE—No. XI

Of the excessive and passionate devotion which was felt for the French republic, and of the blind and almost equally extensive hostility to the measures of the administration, the gazettes of the day are replete with the most abundant proof. As an example of this spirit, the following toasts are selected, because they were given at a festival made by persons of some distinction, at which the governor of Pennsylvania and the minister of France were present.

To commemorate the 14th of July, the anniversary of the destruction of the Bastile, the officers of the 2d regiment of Philadelphia militia assembled at Weed's ferry. Eighty-five rounds were discharged from the artillery in honour of the eighty-five departments of France, and the following toasts were given:

1st. The *fourteenth* day of July; may it be a sabbath in the calendar of freedom, and a jubilee to the European world.

2d. The *tenth* of August: May the freeman who offered up their lives on the altar of liberty be ever remembered as martyrs, and canonized as saints.

3d. May the Bastile of despotism throughout the earth be crumbled into dust, and the Phœnix of freedom grow out of the ashes.

4th. Nerve to the arm, fortitude to the heart, and triumph to the soul struggling for the rights of man.

5th. May no blind attachment to men lead France to the precipice of that tyranny from which they have escaped.

6th. May the sister republics of France and America be as incorporate as light and heat, and the man who endeavours to disunite them be viewed as the Arnold of his country.

7th. May honour and probity be the principles by which the connexions of free nations shall be determined; and no Machiavelian commentaries explain the text of treaties.

8th. *The treaty of alliance with France:* may those who attempt to evade or violate the political obligations and faith of our country be considered as traitors, and consigned to infamy.

9th. *The citizen soldiers*, before they act may they know and approve the cause, and may remorse attend the man that would think of opposing the French while they war for the rights of man.

10th. The *youth* of the *Paris legion;* may the rising generation of America imitate their heroism and love of country.

11th. The republics of France and America; may the cause of liberty ever be a bond of union between the two nations.

12th. A dagger to the bosom of that man who makes patriotism a cover to his ambition, and feels his country's happiness absorbed in his own.

13th. May *French*, superior to *Roman* or *Grecian* virtue, be the electric fluid of freedom, that shall animate and quicken the earth.

14th. Union and mutual confidence to the patriots of France; confusion and distress to the counsels of their enemies.

15th. May the succeeding generation wonder that such beings as *kings* were ever permitted to exist.

Volunteer from the chair.

The rule of proportion; as France acted with respect to America, so may America act with respect to France!

NOTE—No. XII

Of the sensibility of the president to the calumnies against his administration with which the press abounded, and of their new direction against him personally, his correspondence furnishes but few evidences. The first and almost only notice taken of them is in a private letter of the 21st of July, to his friend General Lee, then governor of Virginia, an extract from which follows:

"That there are in this, as in all other countries, discontented characters I well know; as also that these characters are actuated by very different views:—Some good, from an opinion that the measures of the general government are impure;—some bad, and (if I might be allowed to use so harsh an expression) diabolical, inasmuch as they are not only meant to impede the measures of that government generally, but more especially to destroy the confidence which it is necessary the people should place (until they have unequivocal proof of demerit) in their public servants:—for in this light I consider myself whilst I am an occupant of office; and if they were to go further and call me their slave, during this period, I would not dispute the point with them. But in what will this abuse terminate?

"For the result, as it respects myself, I care not. I have a consolation within of which no earthly efforts can deprive me;—and that is, that neither ambitious nor interested motives have influenced my conduct. The arrows of malevolence, therefore, however barbed and pointed, can never reach my most valuable part; though, whilst I am *up* as a *mark*, they will be continually aimed at me. The publications in Freneau's and Bache's papers are outrages on common decency; and they progress in that style in proportion as their pieces are treated with contempt, and passed over in silence by those against whom they are directed. Their tendency, however, is too obvious to be mistaken by men of cool and dispassionate minds;—and, in my opinion, ought to alarm them; because it is difficult to prescribe bounds to their effect.

NOTE—No. XIII

They are as follows:

1st. The original arming and equipping of vessels in the ports of the United States by any of the belligerent parties, for military service, offensive or defensive, is deemed unlawful.

2d. Equipments of merchant vessels, by either of the belligerent parties in the ports of the United States, purely for the accommodation of them as such, is deemed lawful.

3d. Equipments in the ports of the United States of vessels of war in the immediate service of the government of any of the belligerent parties, which if done to other vessels would be of a doubtful nature as being applicable either to commerce or war, are deemed lawful, except those which shall have made prize of the subjects, people, or property of France, coming with their prizes into the ports of the United States pursuant to the seventeenth article of our treaty of amity and commerce with France.

4th. Equipments in the ports of the United States by any of the parties at war with France of vessels fitted for merchandise and war, whether with or without commissions, which are doubtful in their nature as being applicable either to commerce or war, are deemed lawful, except those which shall have made prize, &c.

5th. Equipments of any of the vessels of France, in the ports of the United States, which are doubtful in their nature as being applicable to commerce or war, are deemed lawful.

6th. Equipments of every kind in the ports of the United States, of privateers of the powers at war with France, are deemed unlawful.

7th. Equipments of vessels in the ports of the United States, which are of a nature solely adapted to war, are deemed unlawful; except those stranded or wrecked, as mentioned in the eighteenth article of our treaty with France, the sixteenth of our treaty with the United Netherlands, the ninth of our treaty with Prussia, and except those mentioned in the nineteenth article of our treaty with France, the seventeenth of our treaty with the United Netherlands, the eighteenth of our treaty with Prussia.

8th. Vessels of either of the parties, not armed, or armed previous to their coming into the ports of the United States, which shall not have infringed any of the foregoing rules, may lawfully engage or enlist therein their own subjects or citizens, not being inhabitants of the United States, except privateers of the powers at war with France, and except those vessels which shall have made prize, &c.

NOTE—No. XIV

The earnestness as well as force with which the argument against this measure was pressed on the British cabinet, and the extreme irritation it produced on the public mind, contrasted with the silence of the executive respecting a much more exceptionable decree of the national convention, and the composure of the people of the United States under that decree, exhibits a striking proof of the difference with which not only the people, but an administration, which the phrensy of the day accused of partiality to England, contemplated at that time the measures of the two nations.

On the 9th of May, 1793, the national convention passed a decree relative to the commerce of neutrals; the first article of which is in these words: "The French ships of war and privateers may stop and bring into the ports of the republic, such neutral vessels as are loaded, in whole or in part either with provisions belonging to neutrals and destined for enemy ports, or with merchandise belonging to enemies."

On the 23d of May, in consequence of the remonstrances of Mr. Morris, the convention declared, "that the vessels of the United States are not comprised in the regulations of the decree of the 9th of May." On the 28th of the same month the decree of the 23d was repealed, and on the first of July it was re-established. But on the 27th of July it was again repealed, and thus the decree of the 9th of May was left in full operation against the vessels of the United States.

So far was this regulation from affecting the sentiments of America for France, that its existence was scarcely known.

NOTE—No. XV

Before these resolutions were offered, the strength of parties was in some measure tried in a fuller house than that which had elected the speaker.

A rule had been entered into by a former congress providing, that on the discussion of confidential communications from the president, the house should be cleared of all persons except the members and clerk. On taking up a confidential message relative to the truce between Portugal and Algiers, the doors as usual were closed. The next day when the subject was resumed, Mr. Nicholas expressed his opinion that there was no necessity for shutting the galleries; upon which the rule was mentioned with a request that it should be read. Mr. Madison moved a reconsideration of this rule. In the course of the debate on the motion, it was said by its advocates that secrecy in a republican government wounds the majesty of the sovereign people—that this government is in the hands of the people—and that they have a right to know all the transactions relative to their own affairs. This right ought not to be infringed incautiously for such secrecy tends to diminish the confidence of the people in their own government.

In reply to these remarks it was said, that because this government is republican, it will not be pretended that it can have no secrets. The President of the United States is the depositary of secret transactions. His duty may lead him to communicate them to the members of the house, and the success, safety, and energy of the government may depend on keeping those secrets inviolable. The people have a right to be well governed. They have interests as well as rights, and it is the duty of the legislature to take every possible measure to promote those interests. To discuss the secret transactions of the government publicly, was the ready way to sacrifice the public interest, and to deprive the government of all foreign information. Afterwards the rule was amended so far as to leave it in the discretion of the house, after receiving a confidential message, to debate upon it in private or in public.

Among the resolutions reported from the committee of the whole house on this occasion, was one for appointing a committee to report the naval force which would be necessary for the protection of the commerce of the United States against the Algerine corsairs, together with an estimate of the expense. It was moved to amend this resolution by adding, "and the ways and means for defraying the same." This motion revived the old party question of calling on the secretary of the treasury to report ways and means. The amendment was carried, Ayes 46. Noes 44.

NOTE—No. XVI

The private correspondence of Mr. Morris with the president exhibits a faithful picture, drawn by the hand of a master, of the shifting revolutionary scenes which with unparalleled rapidity succeeded each other in Paris. With the eye of an intelligent, and of an unimpassioned observer, he marked all passing events, and communicated them with fidelity. He did not mistake despotism for freedom, because it was sanguinary, because it was exercised by those who denominated themselves the people, or because it assumed the name of liberty. Sincerely wishing happiness and a really free government to France, he could not be blind to the obvious truth that the road to those blessings had been mistaken. It was expected by his enemies that the correspondence which was asked for would disclose something which might be deemed offensive to the rulers of the republic, and consequently furnish additional matter for charging the administration with unfriendliness to France.

The resolution requesting all the correspondence, not even excluding that which the president might think proper to withhold, involved considerations of some delicacy, respecting which it was proper that the rights of the executive should be precisely understood. It was, therefore, laid before the cabinet, and, in conformity with their advice, the President sent a message to the senate informing them that he had examined the correspondence they requested, and had caused it to be copied, except in those particulars which in his judgment, for public considerations, ought not to be communicated; which copies he transmitted to them. The nature of these papers, he added, manifested the propriety of their being received as confidential.

NOTE—No. XVII

This opinion derived fresh confirmation from a notification transmitted in August, 1794, by the governor of Upper Canada to Captain Williamson, who was establishing a settlement on the Great Sodus, a bay of lake Ontario, about twenty miles from Oswego, and within the state of New York. Captain Williamson not being at the place, Lieutenant Sheaff, the bearer of the message, addressed a letter to him, in which he said, that he had come with instructions from the lieutenant governor of Upper Canada to demand by what authority an establishment had been ordered at that place, and to require that such a design be immediately relinquished for the reasons stated in the written declaration accompanying the letter.

The written declaration was in these words:

"I am commanded to declare that, during the inexecution of the treaty of peace between Great Britain and the United States, and until the existing differences respecting it shall be mutually and finally adjusted, the taking possession of any part of the Indian territory, either for the purposes of war or sovereignty, is held to be a direct violation of his Britannic majesty's rights, as they unquestionably existed before the treaty, and has an immediate tendency to interrupt, and in its progress to destroy that good understanding which has hitherto subsisted between his Britannic majesty and the United States of America. I, therefore, require you to desist from any such aggression."

In the same spirit, complaints had been made as early as 1792, of encroachments made by the people of Vermont on a country confessedly within the territorial line of the United States, but inhabited by persons said to live under the protection of the British garrisons.

NOTE—No. XVIII

On receiving the resignation of the secretary, the President addressed a letter to him expressive of the sense he entertained of his services. This letter is not found in the letter book, but its purport may be collected from the following answer.

Philadelphia, February 3d, 1795.

"Sir,—My particular acknowledgments are due for your very kind letter of yesterday. As often as I may recall the vexations I have endured, your approbation will be a great and precious consolation.

"It was not without a struggle that I yielded to the very urgent motives which impelled me to relinquish a station in which I could hope to be in any degree instrumental in promoting the success of an administration under your direction; a struggle which would have been far greater had I supposed that the prospect of future usefulness was proportioned to the sacrifices to be made.

"Whatever may be my destination hereafter, I entreat you to be persuaded (not the less for my having been sparing in professions) that I shall never cease to render a just tribute to those eminent and excelling qualities which have been already productive of so many blessings to your country—that you will always have my fervent wishes for your public and personal felicity, and that it will be my pride to cultivate a continuance of that esteem, regard and friendship, of which you do me the honour to assure me."

NOTE—No. XIX

The following toasts which were given at a civic feast in Philadelphia on the first of May, attended by a great number of American citizens, to celebrate the victories of France, and which was honoured by the presence of the minister and consul of the French republic, and of the consul of Holland, then subdued by the arms of France, will furnish some idea of the prevailing spirit of the times.

1st. The republic of France; whose triumphs have made this day a jubilee; may she destroy the race of kings, and may their broken sceptres and crowns, like the bones and teeth of the Mammoth, be the only evidences that such monsters ever infested the earth.

2d. The republic of France; may the shores of Great Britain soon hail the tri-coloured standard, and the people rend the air with shouts of long live the republic.

3d. The republic of France; may her navy clear the ocean of pirates, that the common highway of nations may no longer, like the highways of Great Britain, be a receptacle for robbers.

4th. The republic of France; may all free nations learn of her to transfer their attachment from men to principles, and from individuals to the people.

5th. The republic of France; may her example in the abolition of titles and splendour be a lesson to all republics to destroy those leavens of corruption.

6th. The republic of Holland; may the flame of liberty which they have re-kindled never be permitted to expire for want of vigilance and energy.

7th. The republic of Holland; may her two sisters, the republics of France and America, form with her an invincible triumvirate in the cause of liberty.

8th. The republic of Holland; may she again give birth to a Van Tromp and De Ruyter, who shall make the satellites of George tremble at their approach, and seek their safety in flight.

9th. The republic of Holland; may that fortitude which sustained her in the dire conflict with Philip II. and the success that crowned her struggles, be multiplied upon her, in the hour of her regeneration.

10th. The republic of Holland; may that government which they are about establishing have neither the balances of aristocracy, nor the checks of monarchy.

11th. The republic of America; may the sentiment that impelled her to resist a British tyrant's will, and the energy which rendered it effectual, prompt her to repel usurpation in whatever shape it may assail her.

12th. The republic of America; may the aristocracy of wealth founded upon the virtues, the toils, and the blood of her revolutionary armies soon vanish, and like the baseless fabric of a vision, leave not a wreck behind.

13th. The republic of America; may her government have public good for its object, and be purged of the dregs of sophisticated republicanism.

14th. The republic of America; may the alliance formed between her and France acquire vigour with age, and that man be branded as the enemy of liberty who shall endeavour to weaken or unhinge it.

15th. The republic of America; may her administration have virtue enough to defy the ordeal of patriotic societies, and patriotism enough to cherish instead of denouncing them.

It was not in Philadelphia alone that this temper was manifested. In every part of the United States, the love of France appeared to be a passion much more active with immense numbers, than that of America. Her victories were celebrated with enthusiasm, her heroes were toasted on public occasions, and moderation with regard to England was deemed a crime not readily to be pardoned.

General Washington received an invitation to attend this feast in the following terms.

Sir,—The subscribers, a committee in behalf of a number of American, French, and Dutch citizens, request the honour of your company to a civic festival, to be given on Friday, April 17th, appointed to celebrate the late victories of the French republic, and the emancipation of Holland.

NOTE—No. XX

A letter addressed to his government in October, 1794, by the minister of the French republic was intercepted by the captain of a British frigate and forwarded to Mr. Hammond, by whom it was delivered about the last of July to the secretary of the treasury, who, on the arrival of the President in Philadelphia, placed it in his hands. This letter alluded to communications from Mr. Randolph which, in the opinion of the President, were excessively improper. The ecclaircissements which the occasion required were followed by the resignation of the secretary. For the purpose, he alleged, of vindicating his conduct, he demanded a sight of a confidential letter which had been addressed to him by the President, and which was left in the office. His avowed design was to give this as well as some others of the same description to the public in order to support the allegation, that in consequence of his attachment to France and to liberty, he had fallen a victim to the intrigues of a British and an aristocratic party. The answer given to this demand was a license which few politicans in turbulent times could allow to a man who had possessed the unlimited confidence of the person giving it. "I have directed," said the President, "that you should have the inspection of my letter of the 22d of July, agreeable to your request: and you are at full liberty to publish without reserve *any* and *every* private and confidential letter I ever wrote *you:* nay more—every word I ever uttered to or in your presence, from whence you can derive any advantage in your vindication."

As the asperity with which Mr. Randolph spoke of the President on other occasions as well as in his vindication, was censured by many, it may rescue the reputation of that gentleman from imputations which might be injurious to it to say that, some time before his death, he had the magnanimity to acknowledge the injustice of those imputations. A letter to the honourable Bushrod Washington, of July 2d, 1810, a copy of which was transmitted by Mr. Randolph to the author, contains the following declarations among others of similar import. "I do not retain the smallest degree of that feeling which roused me fifteen years ago against some individuals. For the world contains no treasure, deception, or charm which can seduce me from the consolation of being in a state of good will towards all mankind; and I should not be mortified to ask pardon of any man with whom I have been at variance for any injury which I may have done him. If I could now present myself before your venerated uncle, it would be my pride to confess my contrition that I suffered my irritation, let the cause be what it might, to use some of those expressions respecting him which, at this moment of my indifference to the ideas of the world, I wish to recall, as being inconsistent with my subsequent conviction. My life will I hope be sufficiently extended for the recording of my sincere opinion of his virtues and merit, in a style which is not the result of a mind merely debilitated by misfortune, but of that Christian philosophy on which alone I depend for inward tranquillity."

NOTE—No. XXI

This place was offered to Mr. Henry, a gentleman of eminent talents, great influence, and commanding eloquence. He had led the opposition to the constitution in Virginia, but, after its adoption, his hostility had in some measure subsided. He was truly a personal friend of the President, and had lately manifested a temper not inimical to the administration. The chief magistrate was anxious to engage him in the public service, but was aware of the embarrassments which must result from placing in so confidential a station, a person whose opinions might lead him to thwart every measure of the executive. It was, therefore, necessary to come to some explanations with Mr. Henry on this subject, and the letter which invited him into the department of state opened the way for this explanation by stating truly the views and character of the administration. "I persuade myself, sir," said the President, "it has not escaped your observation, that a crisis is approaching which must, if it can not be arrested, soon decide whether order and good government shall be preserved, or anarchy and confusion ensue. I can most religiously aver that I have no wish incompatible with the dignity, happiness, and true interests of the people of this country. My ardent desire is, and my aim has been (as far as depended upon the executive department) to comply strictly with all our foreign and domestic engagements; but to keep the United States free from political connexions with *every* other country;—to see them independent of *all*, and under the influence of *none*. In a word, I want an *American* character; that the powers of Europe may be convinced we act for *ourselves* and not for *others*. This, in my judgment, is the only way to be respected abroad, and happy at home; and not by becoming the partisans of Great Britain or France, create dissensions, disturb the public tranquillity, and destroy, perhaps forever, the cement that binds the union.

"I am satisfied these sentiments can not be otherwise than congenial to your own. Your aid, therefore, in carrying them into effect would be flattering and pleasing to me."

This accurate chart of the road he was invited to travel, presented in itself no impediments which to Mr. Henry appeared insurmountable. By private considerations alone was he restrained from proceeding in it.

NOTE—No. XXII

The course of the war in Europe had brought the two parties into opposition on a point on which no difference had originally existed between them, which gave more countenance to the charge that the advocates of the American government were unfriendly to France than it could justly claim when first made. Those who in 1793 had supported the proclamation of neutrality, and the whole system connected with it were then, generally speaking, ardent and sincere in their wishes for the success of the French arms. But as the troops of the republic subdued Belgium and Holland; as they conquered Italy, and established the complete influence of France over the monarchy of Spain, this union of sentiment gradually disappeared. By one party it was contended that America could feel no interest in seeing Europe subjected to any one power. That to such a power, the Atlantic would afford no impassable barrier; and that no form of government was a security against national ambition. They, therefore, wished this series of victories to be interrupted; and that the balance of Europe should not be absolutely overturned. Additional strength was undoubtedly given to this course of reasoning by the aggressions of France on the United States.

In the opinion of the opposite party, the triumphs of France were the triumphs of liberty. In their view every nation which was subdued, was a nation liberated from oppression. The fears of danger to the United States from the further aggrandizement of a single power were treated as chimerical, because that power being a republic must, consequently, be the friend of republics in every part of the globe, and a stranger to that lust of domination which was the characteristic passion of monarchies. Shifting with address the sentiment really avowed by their opponents, they ridiculed a solicitude for the existence of a balance of power in Europe, as an opinion that America ought to embark herself in the crusade of kings against France in order to preserve that balance.

NOTE—No. XXIII.

The following extract from a letter written to General Knox the day before the termination of his office, exhibits the sentiments with which he contemplated this event, and with which he viewed the unceasing calumnies with which his whole administration continued to be aspersed.

"To the wearied traveller who sees a resting place, and is bending his body to lean thereon, I now compare myself; but to be suffered to do *this* in peace, is too much to be endured by *some*. To misrepresent my motives; to reprobate my politics; and to weaken the confidence which has been reposed in my administration;—are objects which can not be relinquished by those who will be satisfied with nothing short of a change in our political system. The consolation, however, which results from conscious rectitude, and the approving voice of my country unequivocally expressed by its representatives—deprives their sting of its poison, and places in the same point of view both the weakness and the malignity of their efforts.

"Although the prospect of retirement is most grateful to my soul, and I have not a wish to mix again in the great world, or to partake in its politics, yet I am not without my regrets at parting with (perhaps never more to meet) the few intimates whom I love. Among these, be assured you are one.

NOTE—No. XXIV

In the speech delivered by the President on taking the oaths of office, after some judicious observations on the constitution of his country, and on the dangers to which it was exposed, that able statesman thus spoke of his predecessor.

"Such is the amiable and interesting system of government (and such are some of the abuses to which it may be exposed) which the people of America have exhibited, to the admiration and anxiety of the wise and virtuous of all nations, for eight years, under the administration of a citizen, who, by a long course of great actions, regulated by prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude, conducting a people inspired with the same virtues, and animated with the same ardent patriotism and love of liberty, to independence and peace, to increasing wealth and unexampled prosperity, has merited the gratitude of his fellow-citizens, commanded the highest praises of foreign nations, and secured immortal glory with posterity.

"In that retirement which is his voluntary choice, may he long live to enjoy the delicious recollection of his services, the gratitude of mankind, the happy fruits of them to himself and the world, which are daily increasing, and that splendid prospect of the future fortunes of his country which is opening from year to year. His name may be still a rampart, and the knowledge that he lives a bulwark against all open or secret enemies of his country's peace."

NOTE—No. XXV

To testify their love for the person who had for eight years administered the government of the United States, the merchants of Philadelphia had prepared a splendid banquet for the day, to which the general, several officers of rank in the late army, the heads of departments, foreign ministers, and other persons of distinction were invited.

In the rotundo in which it was given, an elegant compliment was prepared for the *principal guest*, which is thus described in the papers of the day.

"Upon entering the area the general was conducted to his seat. On a signal given, music played Washington's march, and a scene which represented simple objects in the rear of the principal seat was drawn up, and discovered emblematical painting.

"The principal was a female figure large as life, representing America, seated on an elevation composed of sixteen marble steps. At her left side, stood the federal shield and eagle, and at her feet, lay the cornucopiæ; in her right hand, she held the Indian calamut of peace supporting the cap of liberty: in the perspective appeared the temple of fame; and on her left hand, an altar dedicated to public gratitude, upon which incense was burning. In her left hand she held a scroll inscribed valedictory; and at the foot of the altar lay a plumed helmet and sword, from which a figure of General Washington, large as life, appeared, retiring down the steps, pointing with his right hand to the emblems of power which he had resigned, and with his left to a beautiful landscape representing Mount Vernon, in front of which oxen were seen harnessed to the plough. Over the general appeared a *Genius* placing a wreath of laurels on his head."

NOTE—No. XXVI

A letter from Mr. Jefferson to Mr. Mazzei, an Italian who had passed some time in the United States, was published in Florence, and republished in the Moniteur, with some severe strictures on the conduct of the United States, and a remark "that the French government had testified its resentment by breaking off communication with an ungrateful and faithless ally until she shall return to a more just and benevolent conduct. No doubt," adds the editor, "it will give rise in the United States to discussions which may afford a triumph to the party of good republicans, the friends of France.

"Some writers, in disapprobation of this wise and necessary measure of the directory, maintain that, in the United States, the French have for partisans only certain demagogues who aim to overthrow the existing government. But their impudent falsehoods convince no one, and prove only, what is too evident, that they use the liberty of the press to serve the enemies of France."

Mr. Jefferson, in his correspondence,[1] has animadverted on the preceding note with such extreme bitterness, as to impose on its author the necessity of entering into some explanations. Censure from a gentleman who has long maintained an unexampled ascendency over public opinion, can not be entirely disregarded.

The offence consists in the reference to the letter written by him to Mr. Mazzei, which was published in Florence, and republished in Paris by the editor of the Moniteur, then the official paper of the Directory. In this letter, Mr. Jefferson says, a paragraph was interpolated which makes him charge his own country with ingratitude and injustice to France.

By the word "country," Mr. Jefferson is understood to allude to the government, not to the people of America.

This letter, containing the sentence now alleged to be interpolated, was published throughout the United States in the summeer of 1797. It became immediately, as may well be supposed, the subject of universal conversation. The writer, and the individual to whom it particularly alludes, filled too large a space in the public mind for such a paper not to excite general attention and deep interest. It did excite both.

Had it been fabricated, Mr. Jefferson, it was supposed, could not have permitted it to remain uncontradicted. It came in a form too authentic, the matter it contained affected his own reputation and that of the illustrious individual who is its principal subject, too vitally to permit the imputation to remain unnoticed. It would not, it could not have remained unnoticed, if untrue. Yet its genuineness was never questioned by Mr. Jefferson, or by any of his numerous friends. Not even to General Washington, as is now avowed, was it ever denied. Had it been denied to him, his strong sense of justice and of right would have compelled him to relieve the reputation of the supposed writer from a charge of such serious import.

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[1] Vol. iv. p. 402.

It was, of course, universally received as a genuine letter. An open avowal of it could not have added to the general conviction.

The letter having this irresistible claim on the general confidence, no one part of it was entitled to less credit than every other. The interpolation of a particular sentence was neither suggested nor suspected. The whole was published in Europe and republished in America as the letter of Mr. Jefferson, with his name subscribed. The genuineness of no part of it was ever called into question. How then could the public or any individual have ventured to select a particular sentence, and to say—this is spurious?

Had it been suggested by Mr. Jefferson or his confidential friends that the letter was in general his, but that one sentence was fabricated, there is not perhaps an individual in the United States who would have pointed to that which censured the conduct of our government towards France, as the fabricated sentence. That which placed the then chief magistrate at the head of the "Anglican, monarchical, and aristocratical party which had sprung up," would have been much more probably selected. This conjecture is hazarded because, at the date of the letter,[1] Mr. Jefferson shared the confidence of General Washington, and was on terms of intimate professed friendship with him; while his censures of the conduct of the United States towards France were open and unreserved. The sentence there said to be interpolated would, if really written by him, have involved no imputation on his sincerity,—would have consisted perfectly with his general declarations. These declarations were so notorious, especially after the mission of Mr. Jay to Great Britain, and the reception of the treaty negotiated by him, that there was perhaps not an individual in the United States, at all conversant with public affairs, to whom they were unknown. Without reference to other proofs, sufficient evidence of this fact is furnished by that portion of his correspondence which has been selected for publication. Some examples will be quoted.

In a letter of the 27th of April, 1795,[2] he says, "I sincerely congratulate you on the great prosperities of our two first allies, the French and the Dutch.[3] If I could but see them now at peace with the rest of their continent, I should have little doubt of dining with Pichegru in London next autumn; for I believe I should be tempted to leave my clover for a while, to go and hail the dawn of republicanism in that island."

In a letter of September 21st, 1795,[4] after speaking of the discussions in the papers concerning the treaty, and alluding to the efforts made to give it effect as the boldest act of Hamilton and Jay to undermine the government, he says, "a bolder party stroke was never struck. For it certainly is an attempt by a party who find they have lost their majority in one branch of the legislature, to make a law by the aid of the other branch and of the executive, under colour of a treaty, which shall bind up the hands of the adverse branch from ever restraining the commerce of their patron nation."

On the 30th of November, 1795,[5] he says, "I join with you in thinking the treaty an execrable thing." "I trust the popular branch of the legislature will disapprove of it, and thus rid us of this infamous act, which is really nothing more than an alliance between England and the Anglo men of this country, against the legislature and people of the United States."

On the 21st of December, 1795,[6] speaking of a contemporary member of the cabinet, he says, "The fact is that he has generally given his principles to the one party and his practice to the other, the oyster to one, and the shell to the other. Unfortunately, the shell was generally the lot of his friends, the French and Republicans, and the oyster of their antagonists."

On the 21st of March, 1796,[7] he says, "The British treaty has been formally at length laid before congress. All America is a tiptoe to see what the house of representatives will decide on it." Speaking of the right of the legislature to determine whether it shall go into effect or not, and of the vast importance of the determination, he adds, "It is fortunate that the first decision is to be made in a case so palpably atrocious as to have been predetermined by all America."

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[1] April, 1796.

[2] Vol. iii. p. 313.

[3] Holland, it will be remembered, had been conquered by Pichegru.

[4] Vol. iii. p. 316.

[5] Vol. iii p. 317.

[6] Vol. iii. p. 319.

[7] Vol. iii. p. 323.

On the 27th of the same month he says,[1] "If you decide in favour of your right to refuse co-operation, I should wonder on what occasion it is to be used, if not in one, where the rights, the interest, the honour and faith of our nation are so grossly sacrificed; where a faction has entered into a conspiracy with the enemies of their country to chain down the legislature at the feet of both; where the whole mass of your constituents have condemned the work in the most unequivocal manner, and are looking to you as their last hope to save them from the effects of the avarice and corruption of the first agent, the revolutionary machinations of others, and the incomprehensible acquiescence of the only honest man who has assented to it. I wish that his honesty and his political errors may not furnish a second occasion to exclaim, 'curse on his virtues, they have undone his country.'"

On the 12th of June, 1796,[2] he says, "Congress have risen. You will have seen by their proceedings what I always observed to you, that one man outweighs them all in influence over the people, who have supported his judgment against their own, and that of their representatives. Republicanism must lie on its oars, resign the vessel to its pilot, and themselves to the course he thinks best for them."

On the 22d of January, 1797,[3] he says, "I sincerely deplore the situation of our affairs with France. War with them and consequent alliance with Great Britain will completely compass the object of the executive council from the commencement of the war between France and England; taken up by some of them from that moment; by others more latterly."

On the 17th of June, 1797,[4] he says, "I have always hoped that the popularity of the late President being once withdrawn from active effect, the natural feelings of the people towards liberty would restore the equilibrium between the executive and legislative departments which had been destroyed by the superior weight and effect of that popularity; and that their natural feelings of moral obligation would discountenance the unnatural predilection of the executive in favour of Great Britain. But, unfortunately, the preceding measures had already alienated the nation who were the object of them, and the reaction has on the minds of our citizens an effect which supplies that of the Washington popularity.

"P. S. Since writing the above we have received a report that the French Directory has proposed a declaration of war against the United States to the council of Ancients, who have rejected it. Thus we see two nations who love one another affectionately, brought by the ill temper of their executive administrations to the very brink of a necessity to imbrue their hands in the blood of each other."

On the 14th of February, 1799,[5] he says, "The President has appointed, and the senate approved, Rufus King, to enter into a treaty of commerce with the Russians, at London, and William Smith (Phocion) envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary to go to Constantinople to make one with the Turks. So that as soon as there is a coalition of Turks, Russians, and English against France, we seize that moment to countenance it as openly as we dare, by treaties which we never had with them before. All this helps to fill up the measure of provocation towards France, and to get from them a declaration of war which we are afraid to be the first in making."

If these sentiments, in perfect coincidence with the pretensions of France, and censuring the neutral course of the American government, were openly avowed by Mr. Jefferson; if, when they appeared embodied in a letter addressed to a correspondent in Europe, and republished throughout the United States, they remained, even after becoming the topic of universal interest and universal excitement, totally uncontradicted, who could suspect that any one sentence, particularly that avowing a sentiment so often expressed by the writer, had been interpolated?

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[1] Vol. iii. p. 324.
[2] Vol. iii. p. 328.
[3] Vol. iii. p. 347.
[4] Vol. iii. p. 357.
[5] Vol. iii. p. 418.

Yet Mr. Jefferson, unmindful of these circumstances, after some acrimonious remarks on Colonel Pickering, has said,[1] "and even Judge Marshall makes history descend from its dignity, and the ermine from its sanctity, to exaggerate, to record, and to sanction this forgery."

The note itself will best demonstrate the inaccuracy of this commentary. To this text an appeal is fearlessly made.

This unmerited invective is followed by an accusation not less extraordinary. It is made a cause of crimination that the author has copied the remark of the Parisian editor, instead of the letter itself.

To remove this reproach, he will now insert the letter, not as published in Europe, and transferred from the French to the American papers, but as preserved and avowed by Mr. Jefferson, and given to the world by his grandson. It is in these words.

"Monticello, April 24th, 1796.

[2] "My Dear Friend,

"The aspect of our politics has wonderfully changed since you left us. In place of that noble love of liberty and republican government which carried us triumphantly through the war, an Anglican, monarchical, and aristocratical party has sprung up, whose avowed object is to draw over us the substance as it has already done the forms of the British government. The main body of our citizens, however, remain true to their republican principles; the whole landed interest is republican, and so is a great mass of talents. Against us are the executive, the judiciary, two out of three branches of the legislature, all the officers of the government, all who want to be officers, all timid men who prefer the calm of despotism to the boisterous sea of liberty, British merchants and Americans trading on British capitals, speculators and holders in the banks and public funds, a contrivance invented for the purposes of corruption, and for assimilating us in all things to the rotten as well as sound parts of the British model. It would give you a fever were I to name to you the apostates who have gone over to these heresies, men who were Samsons in the field and Solomons in council, but who have had their heads shorn by the harlot England. In short, we are likely to preserve the liberty we have obtained only by unremitting labours and perils. But we shall preserve it; and our mass of weight and wealth on the good side is so great as to leave no danger that force will ever be attempted against us. We have only to awake and snap the Lilliputian cords with which they have been entangling us during the first sleep which succeeded our labours.

"I will forward the testimonials, &c."

The reader is requested to pause, to reflect on the state of things at the date of this letter, and to ask himself if its inevitable tendency be not to strengthen the impression in the Directory of France which had influenced its conduct towards the United States?—If it be not in the same spirit with the interpolated sentence, carried to a greater extreme, and calculated to produce the same effect?—If the editor who made the interpolation might not reasonably suppose that he was only applying expressly to France a sentiment already indicated in terms too plain to be misunderstood?

France and Great Britain were then waging deadly war against each other. In this mortal conflict, each sought to strengthen herself, or weaken her adversary by any influence to be acquired over foreign powers—by obtaining allies when allies were attainable, or securing neutrality where co-operation was not to be expected. The temper with which the American people contemplated this awful spectacle can not be forgotten. The war of our revolution, in which France fought by the side of

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[1] Vol. iv. p. 402.

[2] Vol. iii. p. 327.

America against Great Britain, was fresh in their recollection. Her unexamined professions of republicanism enlisted all their affections in her favour, and all their antipathies against the monarchs with whom she was contending. Feelings which were believed to be virtuous, and which certainly wore the imposing garb of patriotism, impelled them with almost irresistible force against that wise neutrality which the executive government had laboured to preserve, and had persisted in preserving with wonderful and unexampled firmness. France might, not unreasonably, indulge the hope that our government would be forced out of its neutral course, and be compelled to enter into the war as her ally. The letter to Mazzei could scarcely fail to encourage this hope.

The suggestion had been repeatedly made, and France not only countenanced but acted on it, that the American people were ready to take part with her, and were with difficulty restrained by their government. That the government had fallen into the hands of an English party who were the more closely attached to their favourite nation, because they were unfriendly to republicanism, and sought to assimilate the government of the United States to that of England. Partiality to England was ingratitude to France. Monarchical propensities were of course anti-republican, and led to a system of policy separating the United States from republican France, and connecting them with her monarchical enemies.

These sentiments were expressed in the interpolated sentence; and are intimated in terms perhaps more offensive, certainly not to be mistaken, in the letter as avowed.

Review its language.

"In place of that noble love of liberty and republican government which carried us triumphantly through the war, an Anglican, monarchical, and aristocratical party has sprung up, whose avowed object is to draw over us the substance as it has already done the forms of the British government."

Could this party have been friendly—must it not have been hostile to France? It was not only monarchical and aristocratical,—it was Anglican also. Consequently it was anti-Gallican. But it did not comprehend the mass of the people. "The main body of our citizens, however," continues the letter, "remain true to their republican principles; the whole landed interest is republican, and so is a great mass of talents." Who then composed this odious Anglican, monarchical, aristocratical party? The letter informs us. "Against us are the executive, the judiciary, two out of three branches of the legislature, all the officers of the government, all who want to be officers, all timid men who prefer the calm of despotism to the boisterous sea of liberty, British merchants and Americans trading on British capitals, speculators, and holders in the banks and public funds."

The executive then and at least one other branch of the legislature were Anglican. The judiciary, a department not absolutely insignificant in a maritime war, was also Anglican. But the executive, being the organ of intercourse with foreign nations, is considered by them as essentially the government. This being thought Anglican, its course being such as to induce the writer to brand it with this odious epithet, ought it to excite surprise that an editor, the organ of the French government, made the strictures upon it which are quoted in the note? Are not those strictures as applicable to the letter now avowed as to the interpolated sentence?

The remark that the "French government had testified its resentment by breaking off communication with an ungrateful and faithless ally until she shall return to a more just and benevolent conduct," was the assertion of a fact which had taken place, and the commentary discloses its object not less plainly than did the time at which this fact was announced to the American government and people.[1] It will give rise in the United States," says the editor, "to discussions which may afford a triumph to the party of good republicans, the friends of France."

The letter, without the aid of the interpolated sentence, could not fail to cherish this sentiment. It states explicitly an unequivocal division and a decided hostility between those who administered the government, and the great body of land holders, who, in this country, are the people. The first were Anglican and monarchical, the last were republican, and, in the language of the Moniteur, "the friends of France." What so certain to produce or continue the rupture of communication mentioned by the editor as the opinion that this statement was true? If we could doubt, our doubts are removed by the declaration that it would produce "discussions in the United States which may afford a triumph to the party of good republicans, the friends of France;" and by the declaration of Mr. Adet.

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[1] It was announced by Mr. Adet in the crisis of the first contest for the presidency between Mr. Adams and Mr. Jefferson.

The interpolated sentence then does not vary the import of the letter, nor change the impression it made in France, and must make on the mind of the reader.

Were it otherwise, Mr. Jefferson should have directed his reproaches towards himself for the countenance his silent acquiescence gave to the opinion that the whole letter was genuine—not towards the great body of his countrymen who yielded implicit faith to this imposing testimony.

Could such a letter from such a personage be entirely overlooked by the biographer of Washington? Having assumed the task of delineating the character, and detailing the actions and opinions of the great soldier and statesman of America, an essential part of which was to be looked for in the difficulties and the opposition he encountered and overcame, could a transaction which contains such strong intrinsic evidence of those difficulties and that opposition be passed over in total silence? These questions were revolved in his mind while engaged in this part of the work; and the result to which his judgment conducted him was a conviction that, though he might forbear to make those strictures on the letter which the relative situation of the writer and the individual so seriously criminated seemed to invite, his duty required him to notice it so far as it indicated the violence of party spirit at the time, the extreme to which it was carried, the dangers to which it led, and the difficulties which the wise and firm mind of Washington was doomed to encounter.

The remarks of the French editor were quoted because they have a strong tendency, especially when connected with subsequent events, to explain the motives by which the Directory was actuated in its aggressions on the United States, and to justify the policy of the Washington administration. These remarks did not grow out of the interpolated sentence, nor were they confined to it. They apply to the whole letter. That sentence is not cited, nor is any particular allusion made to it, in the note which is charged with "exaggerating, recording, and sanctioning the forgery." How then could Mr. Jefferson deliberately make the charge?

In the same letter he endeavours to convey the opinion that the harsh and injurious strictures made to Mazzei were not intended for General Washington, and that this distinguished individual never applied them to himself.

The evidence in support of this proposition is not derived from the person whose opinion Mr. Jefferson undertakes to state. The writer says,[1] "I do affirm that there never passed a word, written or verbal, directly or indirectly, between General Washington and myself on the subject of that letter." If his observations on this point are to be considered as reasoning rather than assertion, they may be freely examined.

At the head of the list of those composing the "Anglican, monarchical, aristocratical party," the letter places "the executive." "Against us are the executive, the judiciary, two out of three branches of the legislature, all the officers of government, all who want to be officers," &c.

The letter speaks in the present tense, and the term "executive" can describe only the then actual President. Consequently, it designates General Washington as expressly as if he had been named.

If this positive evidence could be strengthened by auxiliary proof, it is furnished by the same sentence. "All officers of government, all who want to be officers," are included in the enumeration of those composing the party opposed to "the main body of citizens who remained true to republican principles."

By whom were these Anglican, monarchical, and aristocratical officers selected? By General Washington. To him alone were they indebted for their appointments. To whom did those "who wanted to be officers" look for the gratification of their wishes? To the same person. Would every individual in search of office enlist himself in a party so odious to "the main body of our citizens," and "the whole landed interest," if he did not think the road leading directly to that which he sought?

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[1] Vol. iv. p. 401.

As if willing to keep out of view what can not be explained away, Mr. Jefferson turns our attention to other passages supposed to be more equivocal. He insists[1] that the letter saying "that two out of the three branches of the legislature were against us, was an obvious exception of him; it being well known that the majorities in the two branches of the senate and representatives were the very instruments which carried, in opposition to the old and real republicans, the measures which were the subjects of condemnation in this letter."

But did these measures obtain the force of laws by the mere act of the senate and house of representatives? Did not the President assent to them? If he did, how could the expression "two out of three branches of the legislature" be an obvious exception of him? But the letter speaks of the then existing legislature. "Against us *are* two out of three branches of the legislature." The fact is notorious that the house of representatives was, at the date of the letter, opposed to the administration. Mr. Jefferson himself gives us this information. In September, 1795,[2] he terms the effort to carry the treaty with Great Britain into effect, "an attempt of a party who find *they have lost their majority in one branch of the legislature* to make a law by the aid of the other branch and the executive under colour of a treaty," &c. Mr. Jefferson then has deprived himself of this explanation. He could not have intended to exclude the President by the phrase "two out of three branches of the legislature."

The same letter contains also the following expression,[3] "Mr. Pickering quotes the passage in the letter of the men who were Samsons in the field and Solomons in the council, but who had their heads shorn by the harlot England." "Now this expression also was perfectly understood by General Washington. He knew that I meant it for the Cincinnati generally; and that from what had passed between us at the commencement of that institution, I could not mean to include him."

In the letter to Mazzei these words obviously designate distinguished individuals, not whole classes of men, many of whom were unknown. "It would give you a fever were *I to name to you the apostates* who have gone over to these heresies; men who were Samsons in the field, and Solomons in the council, but who have had their heads shorn by the harlot England."

In addition to this apparent allusion to individuals, it may be asked, could Mr. Jefferson mean to say that every officer engaged in the war of our revolution (for almost every one of them was a member of the Cincinnati) was an apostate who had gone over to the heresies he was describing? Could he mean to say that all those who had passed their prime of manhood in the field fighting the battles of American independence, and of republicanism against England, had become apostates from the cause to which their lives had been devoted, and the vile instruments of the power it was their pride and boast to have overthrown? That they were in a body following their ancient chief in a course directly opposite to that glorious career by which they had elevated their country to its high rank among the nations of the earth?

There is other evidence that he could not have intended to fix this foul stigma on the officers of the revolution. They were far from being united in support of the administration. In Virginia certainly, a large number, perhaps a majority of the Cincinnati were opposed to it. Two[4] of them were in congress at the time, and were among the most zealous supporters of Mr. Jefferson, and of that system of measures which he termed republican. The very letter under discussion contains an assertion incompatible with this construction of these terms. "The whole landed interest is republican." At the date of this letter there were few if any members of the Cincinnati in the south who were not also land holders. In the southern region generally, the army of our revolution was officered by land holders and their sons.

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[1] Vol. iv. p. 405.

[2] Vol. iii. p. 316.

[3] Vol. iv. p. 404.

[4] Colonels Cabell and Parker.

But if the writer of the letter could have intended to designate the members of the Cincinnati as "Samsons in the field," could he also have alluded to them as "Solomons in council?" Were the brave and hardy men who passed their youth, not in college, not in study, but under arms, suddenly converted, all of them, into "Solomons in council?" That some of them were entitled to this appellation is acknowledged with pride and pleasure, but as a class, it could not fit them. It is difficult to treat the proposition seriously.

It is impossible for the intelligent reader to concur with Mr. Jefferson in the conclusion he draws from these premises, when he says,[1] "General Washington then understanding perfectly what and whom I meant to designate in both phrases, and that they could not have any application or view to himself, could find in neither any cause of offence to himself."

But were it otherwise, had Mr. Jefferson been as successful in the opinion of others as he would seem to be in his own, in proving that the phrases on which he reasons do not comprehend General Washington, what would be gained? Would it follow that the word "executive" did not mean the President, or that it excluded General Washington who was President when the letter was written, and had been President during the whole time while the laws were enacted, and the measures carried into execution, which he so harshly criminates? If the word "executive" must mean him, does it palliate the injury to be assured that the writer did not class him among "Samsons in the field" or "Solomons in council?"

It is a matter of some surprise to find in a letter written so late as June, 1824, on the political paragraph contained in the letter to Mazzei, the following averment.[2] "In this information there was not one word which would not then have been or would not now be approved by every republican in the United States, looking back to those times."

In June, 1824, then, twenty-eight years after this extraordinary letter was written, and twenty-three years after its principal object had ceased to thwart the policy, or be an obstacle to the ambition of any man, Mr. Jefferson could deliberately, and on full consideration permit himself to make this assertion, and thus in effect to repeat the charge that General Washington belonged to an "Anglican, monarchical, and aristocratical party whose *avowed* object was to draw over us the substance as they had already done the forms of the British government,"—and this too while the venerated object of the charge was the chief magistrate of this great republic, acting under the obligation of a solemn oath "faithfully to execute the office of President of the United States, and to the best of his ability to preserve, protect, and defend the constitution!!!

This unpleasant subject is dismissed. If the grave be a sanctuary entitled to respect many of the intelligent and estimable friends of Mr. Jefferson may perhaps regret that he neither respected it himself, nor recollected that it is a sanctuary from which poisoned arrows ought never to be shot at the dead or the living.

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[1] Vol. iv. p. 406.

[2] Vol. iv. p. 402.

THE END.

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